

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

APRIL 1991

ONE DOLLAR



Editor's Page

Once when I was very small, my mother instructed me to pack a suitcase for a trip. I took the job seriously and packed no clothes. The sole contents of the suitcase were a pair of bristly brown, live caterpillars. Apparently, I had an uncomplicated sense of priorities at the time. Caterpillars were important. Underwear was not.

They say that kids learn racism, whether it be a preference for a certain color of skin or a hatred of snakes, mottled toads, or elegant spiders. I believe that must be true, because today I cannot look at caterpillars without shuddering.

Several years ago, however, while working at a community pool, I temporarily rescued a black snake from death by shovel. Two older men had spotted the snake lolling in the rafters of the picnic area roof after making a magnificent meal of nesting starlings, and they were attempting to poke it down and cut its head off with a shovel.

Backing the men off with hysterical shouts, I soon found myself surrounded by an army of admiring snake-liberating 10-year-olds. The young boys and I planned our strategy involving nets and shepherds' crooks, and despite a minor mishap when the snake darted across the baby pool and nearly into the arms of a woman playing with her 6-month-old baby (no one told us that black snakes could swim), we succeeded in

setting the snake "free" in a nearby meadow. The boys congratulated themselves and retold the story several times over, fashioning a worthy legend out of the deed.

Now I wonder if a few years have aged those boys into snake choppers.

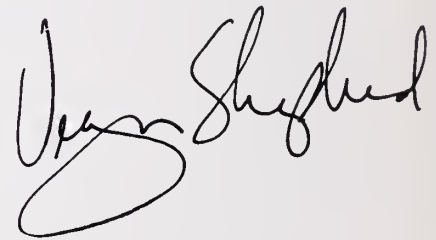
Somehow a child's native lack of prejudice toward any creature and nose-to-nose view of the world vanishes along with diapers. We don't do much to preserve it. But, once we're adults and realize what a wonderful gift we've lost, we can't seem to retrieve it in the muddle of our lives. I'm not even sure that something like a quiet walk in the woods once a week or one weekend backpacking or hunting trip can do much to recapture that level of consciousness, though lots of people will urge you to give it a try. We might indeed feel the "oohs" and "aahs" of a breathtaking scene, but how many of us do more than note with satisfaction a fox or deer slipping through the woods or frog eggs jellied up in a pond? Who is the lucky one amongst us that is driven without a thought to go back to that pond with a dirty jar and scoop up some frog eggs, and wait, intent on watching them turn into something magical with legs and lungs in a few days or weeks?

After all, most of us have seen it all on television, anyway. We've seen the bald eagles and spiders and rare monkeys up close in our living rooms. We've watched them breed and birth

and die, so what else is there to the natural experience? If we go out into the woods, we are too often spoiled by the images we've seen in books or on film; we no longer know how to wait for, how to work for a glimpse of the magical.

Nonetheless, I think that most of us feel that something is missing. Why else would we buy cars that get places faster, machines that finish chores more quickly, and work so frantically to make free time for *ourselves*? It seems the child inside us who had no chores, no responsibilities, no plans for the day keeps pestering us, but we don't make it a habit to listen to the advice of children. So, we keep scraping together moments of free time here and there and squander it on minutes in the woods instead of days.

Still, we never seem to have enough time or inclination to ponder the contents of our suitcases.

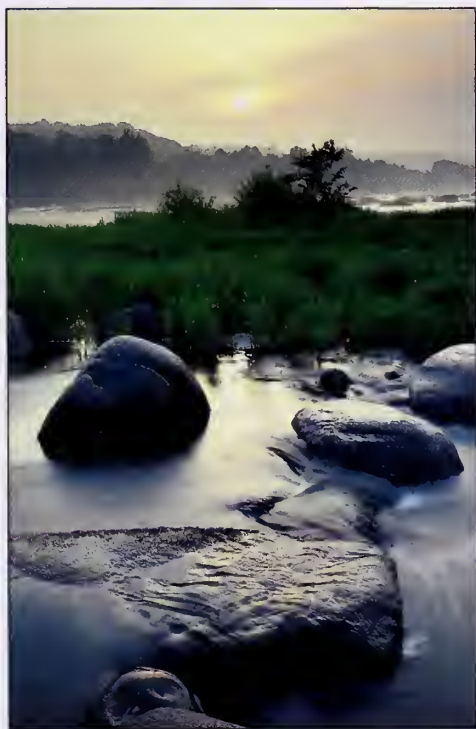




Use our special 1991 fishing guide to help you find the best places to fish. See pg. 11 for details; photo by Lloyd B. Hill.

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

The fishing season is here!



Cover: Sunrise, James River;
photo by Michael R. McCormack.

Back cover: photo by Soc Clay.

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Runners of Spring

photo by Michael R. McCormack



Hickory shad on the Rappahannock

by Gerald Almy

Redbuds are in bloom. The willows are turning green along the shore. The herring are in. An osprey soars on thermals overhead. Is it the same one you see every year, you wonder? All the signs are good.

Rigging up a pair of darts—one red and white, one dark green and chartreuse, you cast out into the pool, let the angular jigs sink briefly, then begin a retrieve.

And suddenly it's there. The weight of the season's first shad hits your line like a transfusion into your veins. After the long cold winter, the fishing season is here at last. The shad bucks and pulls, strips line from the drag in short staccato bursts, then clears the surface in a leap that sends droplets of water sparkling in the morning sunlight. Working the shad in, you marvel at the power and stamina this fish still possesses after such an arduous journey from the ocean. It is a special fish, the first hickory shad of the season—a symbol of the rebirth of spring and the start of a new angling year. Releasing the silver quarry, you renew your casting, taking and releasing over a dozen more migrants from the sea before the morning's flurry of action has passed.

The hickory shad run on the Rappahannock River offers some of the finest fishing of the year in Virginia, starting in late March and extending into early May. For over two decades I have made annual pilgrimages to this rock-studded river to seek out the 1 to 2½ pound fish that have migrated from far out in the Atlantic Ocean, through the Chesapeake, and all the way up this broad, sweeping river to the fall line at Fredericksburg where they are poised for the most important act of their lives—the renewal of the species through procreation.

While their numbers are lower now than they were when I first began fishing the Rappahannock in the 60's, the hickory shad run each spring still provides a special angling thrill. Maybe it's because they come



Anglers use both fly rods and light spinning outfits rigged with streamers or darts to catch these silvery fish who make their spawning run once a year up Virginia's tidal rivers; photo by Gerald Almy.

so far from the deep offshore waters of the Atlantic, like a breath of salt air blown inland for us to relish. Perhaps it's because they are transient, here for a month or two, then gone for another year. Or maybe it's just because they fight so darn well. Whatever the reason, shad seem to hold a unique appeal for anglers.

If you haven't ever tried catching these anadromous fish, it's easy to get started. They can be counted on to arrive in the Fredericksburg area when the river temperature reaches the 50 degree range, increasing in numbers as the water warms into the mid-50's. Typically, this means anywhere from March 20 to April 7.

Early trips can be risky because the water may still be a bit too chilly for many fish to be present, or a cold front may turn them off at this nascent stage of the run. Muddy water is also a possibility after heavy rains. If

you don't have far to drive, you may want to just check out the fishing firsthand. If you have a long ways to go, a preliminary call to a local contact on the river may save a long wasted trip. Chesley's Bait and Tackle (630 Pelham St., Fredericksburg, 703/373-1051) keeps a close tab on the Rappahannock and can tell you what the status of the run is and whether the water is muddy or clear.

Tackle for shad can be either spin gear or a fly rod. For spinning, a 5½ to 7 foot light or ultralight action rod and small reel spooled with 4-pound line is perfect. For fly fishing, I like an 8½ to 9-foot rod, a single action reel and a 5-7 weight forward line. A high-density sinking tip line and short (3-5 foot) leader generally works best, but if you prefer you can go with a floating line, longer leader (8-10 feet) and add split shot to take the fly deep.

Although a few pools can be reached from shore, the bulk of the fishing on the Rappahannock requires chest waders. Some of the rocks can be slippery and the current strong, so use caution and carry a wading staff for support. Another option is to use a johnboat and fish the lower waters below the U.S. 1 Bridge connecting Falmouth and Fredericksburg. There is launching available behind the baseball field on the north shore of the river, east of the bridge, and also at a Game Department ramp south of the bridge. If you fish with a boat, you'll be in tidal water and should concentrate on incoming tides for the best action, particularly when they come early in the morning.

For fishing the rocky broken water above the bridge, the first and last few hours of daylight are best, though dark cloudy days can prolong the bite. Early in the run fish are also



Shad fishing on the Rappahannock requires chest waders and a wading staff for support in negotiating the slippery rocks. Johnboats can also be used to fish the lower waters below the U.S. 1 Bridge; photo by Gerald Almy.

more prone to strike throughout the day. The later in the year it gets, the more crucial it becomes to arrive right at first light or just before sunset.

Since the best shad fishing is concentrated in a short section for a quarter mile or so above and below the U.S. 1 Bridge, you should expect some company when shad fishing. As long as people are considerate of each other, however, this doesn't have to be a problem.

Shad do not feed during their spawning run. Instead, you must goad them into striking by rekindling atavistic instincts from their feeding lives at sea, or by arousing a protective territorial response. The best way to do this is with darts or small bright streamers. Some anglers cast small spoons, too, when spin fishing, but darts are so potent there's really no need for them.

When waters are flowing full early in the run you can use 3/16 ounce darts, and sometimes it pays to even add split shot for extra weight or fish a pair of darts in tandem. After the first week or so of fishing ends and high waters recede to normal levels, a 1/8 ounce dart is usually the best choice. As the season wears on and the fish become more pressured, scale down further to 1/16 and even 1/32 ounce darts, adding split shot 12 inches up the line for casting weight.

Color can make a difference on certain days. A red-headed, white-bodied dart is the traditional offering and usually works well. But purple, pink, black and orange are sometimes effective. A particularly hot combination recently has been a light green or chartreuse body with a dark green head. If you can't find these at your local tackle store, Chesley's, mentioned earlier, always has a good supply.

Concentrate on pools for the most action on shad. Deep ones that eddy off to the side or have a nice slow midsection before tailing out are likely to hold numbers of fish. You can also learn where the prime spots are by watching other anglers around you. The best holes are well known

and by observing where the most fish are being caught, you can pinpoint pools to try later when they are vacant. But it pays to explore, too. I've waded far out in the middle of the river when conditions were safe and discovered untapped pools where shad were abundant but no one was fishing for them.

Positioning is vital. Even after you find a good pool, the dart has to be presented at the right angle or these finicky fish won't strike. The lower halves of the pool or the edge where the main current meets a swirling back eddy are prime spots. Position yourself to the side of these areas and slightly upstream. Cast out and up a bit, let the lure sink for a few seconds and drift towards where you think fish are, then begin a pumping retrieve.

Medium speed is usually best, but sometimes it pays to try crawling the lure in or reeling fast. Some anglers take fish just cranking steadily. My best luck over the years has always come by pumping the rod tip after every turn or two on the reel. If you don't draw strikes, try moving up or downstream just slightly. A different angle of presentation may make the difference between no strikes and catching a dozen fish out of a pool. Also try using more or less split shot. Sometimes the fish may hang just a couple feet below the surface. At other times they'll be right near the bottom. Expect to lose a few darts and carry at least a dozen with you for a morning's outing.

Fly fishing is the most intriguing way of all to catch hickory shad in the Rappahannock. I turned to this method one day many years ago when I had caught so many shad on a good morning spin fishing that it just became too easy. I had tied up some flies for just such an occasion that consisted of a lead-wrapped size 8 hook, a rabbit fur body (yellow, orange or white), a short white marabou wing and fat red head. Tying a brace of these compact streamers to a short leader on a sink-top line, I probed the same pool that had produced so many fish on spin gear and scored on over a dozen more shad

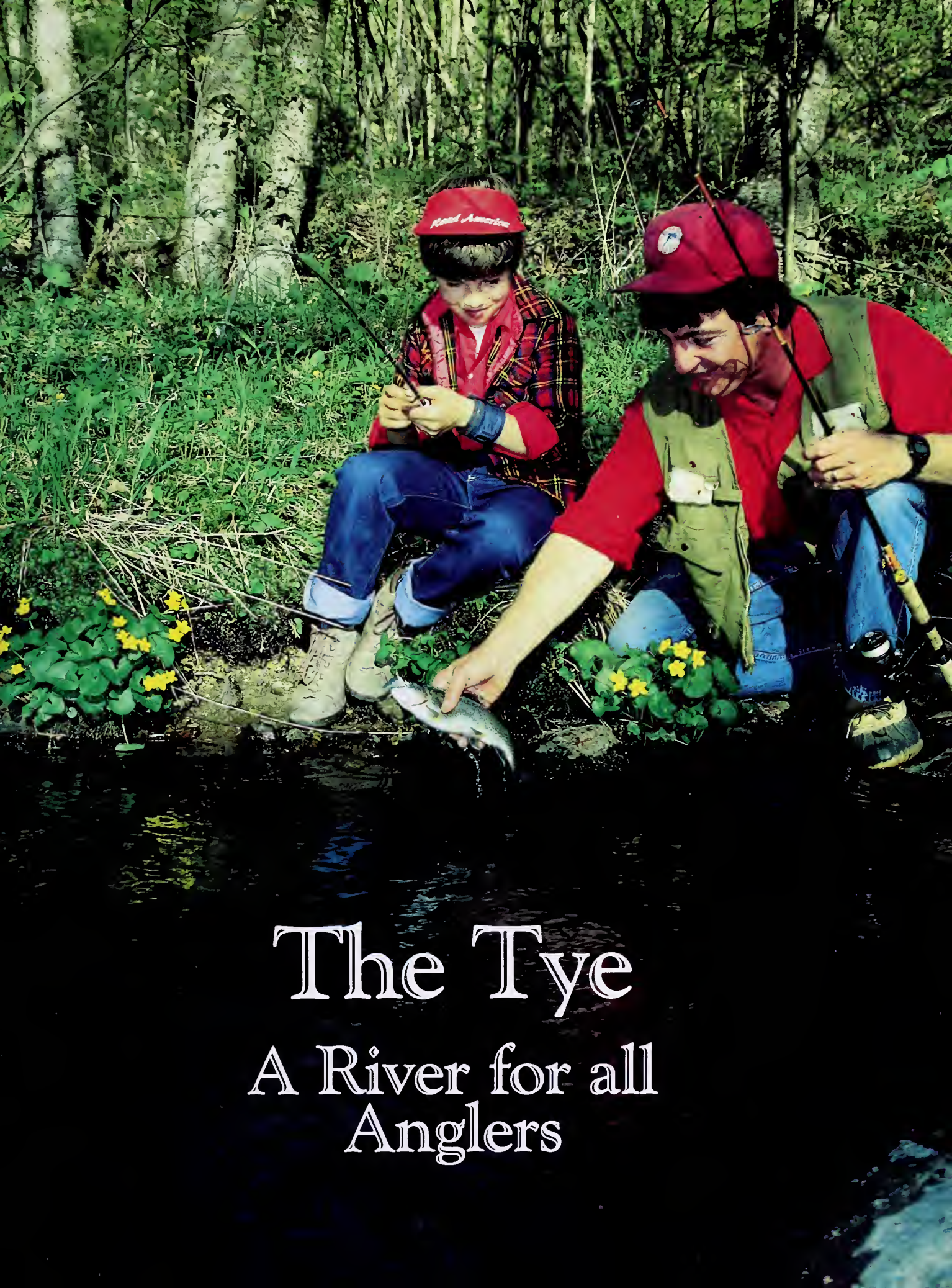
during the remainder of the morning. Since then I've caught lots of shad on flies, either fishing a pair of them at once or using one with a tiny split shot for extra weight. The method seldom accounts for the quantity of fish that spinning tackle does, but makes for a nice change of pace from fishing darts. If you don't tie your own flies, commercial shad patterns available from mail-order houses also work well.

Whether you use spin or fly gear, expect shad to bite in flurries. You may have no action for half an hour, then catch three or four in a 10-minute period.

Whether to keep the shad you catch is a personal decision. If you don't mind wading through the bones, the flesh of hickories is quite tasty. They have a rich, oily texture reminiscent of sardines, but are milder in flavor. One way to make the bones become soft enough that you can eat them is to cook the fish slowly at 250-275 degrees for four or five hours, adding butter, wine, sherry or water occasionally to keep the flesh from drying out. You can also smoke or pickle hickory shad. The females are larger and the flesh is fatter. The roe is also tasty when sauteed in butter or bacon fat and topped with lemon juice.

The course of action I and many anglers have chosen of late, however, is to release all of our shad because of the hard times they face and the decline in numbers that has occurred over the years. Hickories return to the Atlantic after spawning and may live to breed several times. It's amazing how good it makes you feel to slip one of these silver battlers gently back into the river and watch it fin away, knowing how hard it struggled, swimming through ocean, bay and river to reach spawning grounds hundreds of miles from their homes in the sea. □

Gerald Almy lives on the banks of the Shenandoah River and has been a full-time outdoor writer for 17 years. He is currently a hunting and fishing editor on the staff of Sports Afield magazine.



The Tye

A River for all Anglers

The Tye River pleases both trout anglers and smallmouth enthusiasts alike—it all depends on where you fish!

by Bob Gooch

The strike was solid, a jolting hit. No pussyfooting, no toying with the lure.

"Trout?"

The angler beside me looked up and noted my light trout fishing rod was bent almost double.

I was puzzled—but enjoying the moment. Every bit of it. The fish fought hard. Vigorously. Full of ginger.

"No trout!"

But I *was* fishing for trout that bright spring day on the Tye River, up to my hips in the cold, racing stream. I love to fish for put-and-take trout in Virginia streams. Just give those hatchery-reared trout time to become acclimated. Sure, hatchery trout also fight, but their strikes tend to be a bit more subtle, their runs softer than the wild fish on the end of my light spinning tackle. It was straining every inch of that light rod and the thin line.

Then it broke the surface of shattered water, and I recognized it as a smallmouth bass, a scrappy 12 to 15 inches.

Hmmmm . . . I'd moved farther downstream than I realized.

Yes, there are good smallmouth streams in the Old Dominion and lots of fine trout streams, but Nelson County's Tye River is home to both. Its headwaters is designated as trout water, stocked regularly by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and downstream near its confluence

with the James River, it is fine smallmouth bass water. Far upstream, but a bit downstream from its headwaters, bass and trout waters overlap. I was fishing a transition zone of sorts, a stretch of the stream where the next cast could bring a strike from either fish. Downstream, the trout fishing would gradually taper off, and up-

bonus, something that adds a little something extra, moments you never forget. The Tye offers those kind of opportunities.

The Tye forms high on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the George Washington National Forest, at elevations stretching toward 3,000 feet. Up near the winding Blue

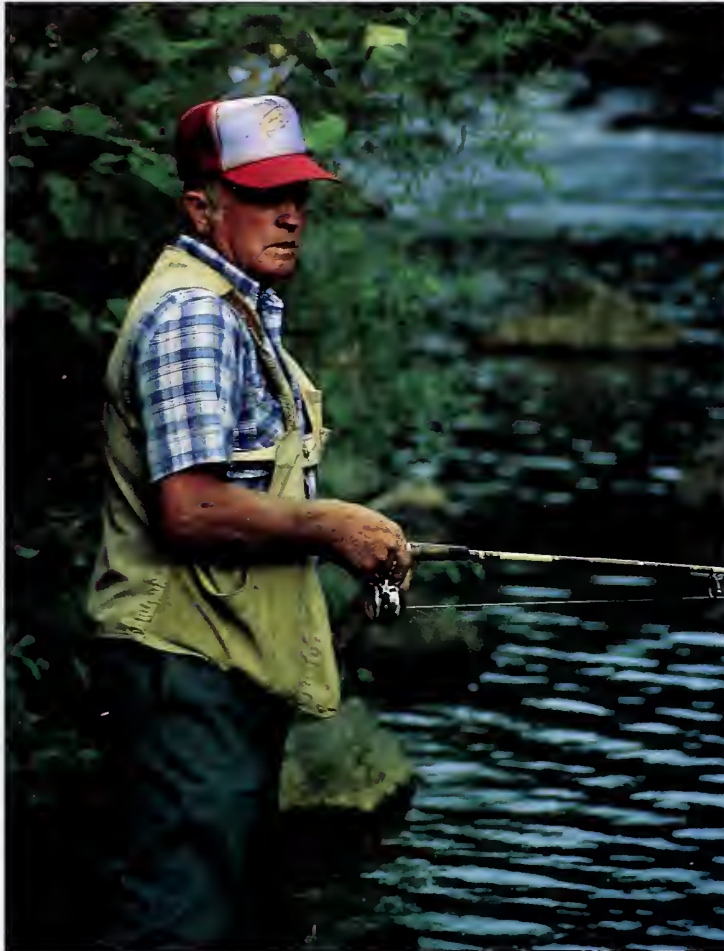
Ridge Parkway that runs south from Afton along the backbone of the famous mountains, is picturesque country, rugged and unforgiving. Lofty mountains are clad in a mixture of coniferous and hardwood forests.

Up there you will find Crabtree Falls, probably more of a Virginia household name than the Tye River, a cascade of water that can and has claimed the lives of those who ignore the risks it presents. And up there are Tye River Gap and Painter Mountain, and the Montebello Fish Hatchery of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Trout from this hatchery go into the Tye and other mountain streams. All are in the watershed of the Tye River.

The North and South Forks of the Tye join at Nash, a mere spot on the

map, to form its main stem. Tiny mountain streams like Durham Run, many without names, join the North Fork, and draining into the South Fork are the likes of Meadow and Mill Creeks and Crabtree Run. Crabtree Falls is on Crabtree Run. Those tiny headwater streams offer fishing for native brook trout, and the North Fork of the Tye is stocked with hatchery fish.

Fishing for released trout is concentrated downstream from the confluence of the North and South Forks. Virginia Primary Highway 56



Trout fishermen; photo by Roy E. Lowe.

stream the bass would slowly disappear. But there are no clear boundaries here. Much depends upon the season, the condition of the stream, and the fish themselves. Adventure-some bass often move far upstream seeking cooler water and a few trout always drop downstream from the stocking zone. An angling friend once caught a nice rainbow trout while fishing for smallmouth bass in the James River, but that was a once-in-a-lifetime kind of thing. Even the bronzeback I caught in the Tye was unusual. Rare catches like that are a

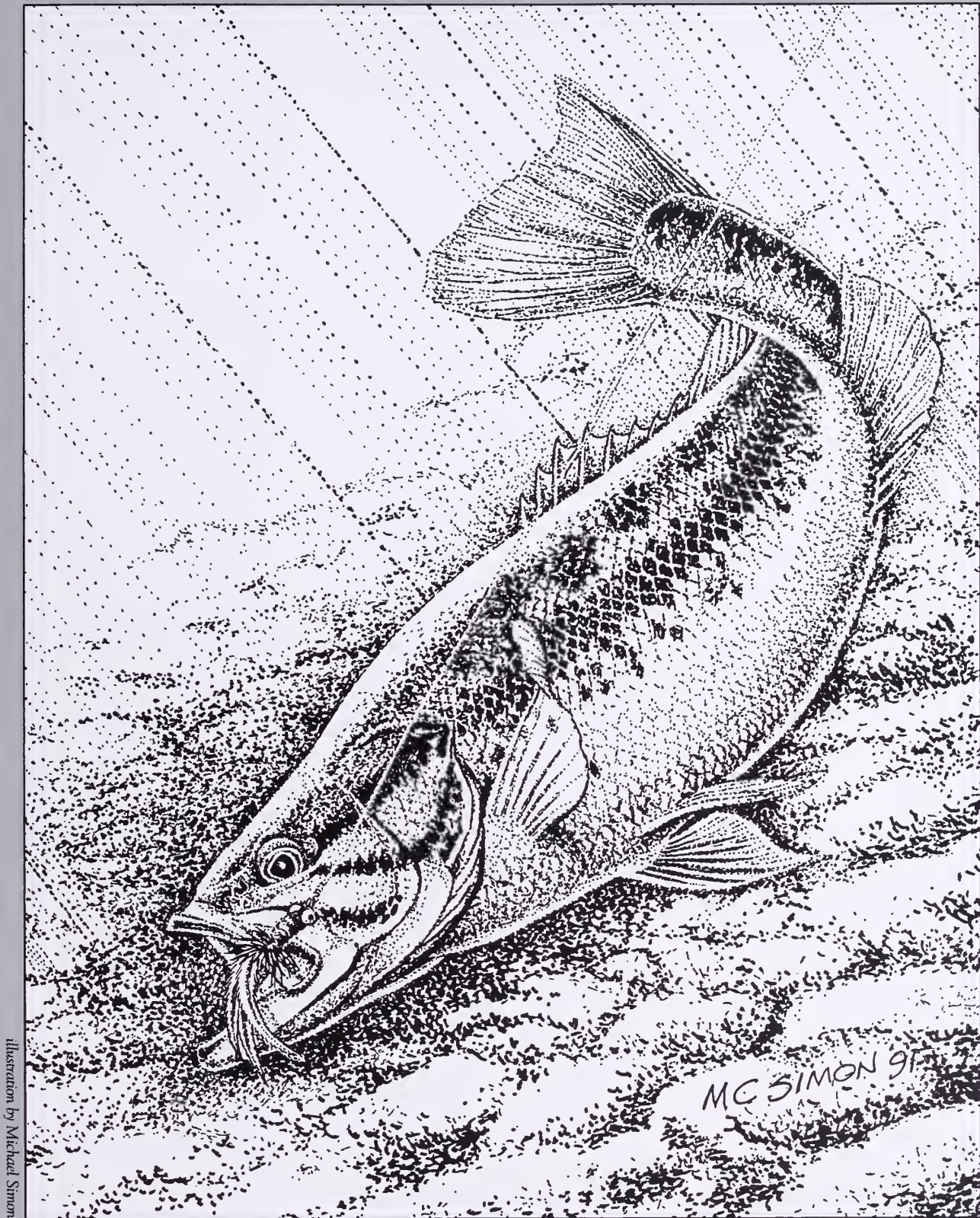
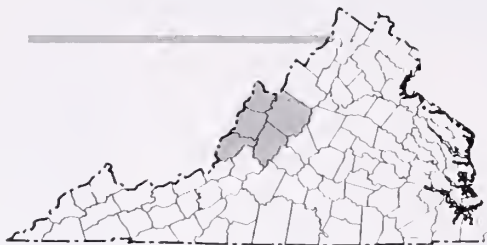


Illustration by Michael Simon

FISHING • GUIDE 1991



Lake Moomaw (Alleghany/Bath County)

This 12-mile long, 2530-acre reservoir has more than 43 miles of shoreline.

Much of the shoreline is adjacent to the 13,428-acre Gathright Wildlife Management Area. The average depth of the lake is 80 feet and flow augmentation results in a normal five to 15 foot drawdown by late summer.

Fisheries Biologist Larry Mohn says there is an equal complement of largemouth bass and smallmouth bass in the lake. There is a strong population of 13- to 15-inch largemouths for 1991 and largemouth bass up to five or six pounds are not unusual.

Fishing can be difficult due to extreme water clarity. Best opportunities are early in the year and night fishing in the shallows after dark in summer.

Mohn regards crappie fishing as outstanding with one to 1.5 pounders common.

Brown trout had been spectacular, but then suddenly dropped off due to low survival rates of the 1987-88 fall stockings. Stocked trout this year will be in the 12-inch range to three pounds.

McConaughy strain rainbow trout are doing very well also. Most trout are caught by trolling with shad imitation crankbaits, some are caught still fishing with live shad 25 feet down and others by jump fishing. Anglers took 37 citation rainbows out of Moomaw last year.

Catfish are good in Moomaw, with many in the 10-16 pound range. Overall, Moomaw yielded 114 citations of eight different species.

The area around Moomaw provides nearly year-round opportunities for outdoor activities, including camping.

For facilities information, contact the James River Ranger District in

Covington (703) 962-2214; the Warm Springs Ranger District in Hot Springs (703) 839-2521; or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Covington (703) 962-1138.

Lake Robertson (Rockbridge County)

Robertson is a 31-acre Department-owned lake on the A. Willis Robertson Recreational Area which is owned and operated by Rockbridge County.

Robertson has excellent largemouth bass populations, according to biologists Larry Mohn and Paul Bugas. It annually produces a few lunkers in the double digits. It is the best bluegill and redear lake in the western part of the state with many 8-inch plus bluegills and ½ to ¾-pound redears.

Walleyes have also been stocked and samples have shown excellent growth with many fish in the 1½ to 3-pound range. Channel catfish populations are only fair.

The area has complete recreational facilities including a boat ramp, lake trail, 50-unit campground, picnic shelters, swimming pool, softball diamond, and playgrounds. A concession rents boats, electric motors and accessories.

The lake is located nine miles west of Lexington. Take Route 251 to Route 770 then Route 652 near Collierstown. Fishing hours correspond with the park's hours. For information, contact the concession office at (703) 463-4164.

Bath County Recreation Ponds

These Virginia Power ponds of 27 and 45 acres have a lot of small bass within the 12-15 inch slot limit. The creel limit is two per day.

The ponds have excellent bluegills in the 8-9 inch range and good numbers of nice-sized channel catfish are present.

The entire 45-acre upper pond and the lower half of the lower 27-acre pond will be open to fishing from the bank. Boating is allowed on the bigger pond only and there is a ramp for private boats. Electric motors only are allowed and there is also a handicapped fishing pier.

The area provides camping, swim-

ming, picnicking and volleyball. It is located on Route 600 north from Route 39 near Warm Springs.

Douthat Lake (Bath County)

Douthat Lake is located within Douthat State Park. This 60-acre lake is a fee-fishing lake that is stocked with rainbow trout twice a week. It's normally open through Labor Day and is stocked all summer if it isn't too hot.

The lake also has good largemouth bass fishing, fair sunfish and channel catfish and has become an excellent chain pickerel lake. In 1989, it produced a new state record when Mark Agner of Roanoke caught a 7 lb. 1 oz. pickerel. The lake produced a total of 26 pickerel citations.

A daily fee-fishing permit costs \$3.50 and after Labor Day until closing, general trout regulations apply and a trout stamp is required.

Elkhorn (Augusta County)

Elkhorn is a 54-acre reservoir located in the George Washington National Forest in Augusta County.

It is stocked in spring and fall with rainbow trout and it also has a fair largemouth bass fishery along with channel catfish, suckers and green sunfish.

There is a dirt boat ramp for small boats, parking, pit toilets and primitive camping. General trout regulations are in effect and both trout and National Forest Stamps are required.

Elkhorn Lake is located on Forest Service Road 96 north of Route 250 west from Staunton.

Sherando Lakes (Augusta County)

Lower Sherando (22 acres) and Upper Sherando (7 acres) are owned by the George Washington National Forest and have full recreational facilities including campgrounds, swimming beach, bathhouse, boat and canoe rentals and hiking trails. Small boats and canoes can also be carried in but there is no ramp.

It was stocked with walleyes in 1988-89. Bluegill and redear sunfish have started to develop with the help of an artificial feeding program by the U.S. Forest Service. Channel catfish are also present.

From June 1 to Labor Day, general statewide fishing regulations apply. After Labor Day to May 31st, a trout stamp is required. A National Forest Stamp is required all year.

The Sherando Lakes are located off of Forest Road 91 about five miles south of Sherando (Route 614) in Augusta County.

Rivers

Maury River

The Maury is excellent for float-fishing from Rockbridge Baths downstream to Glasgow. There's a ramp at Buena Vista under old U.S. 60 and public access at various parks and waysides for cartops and canoes. The dam at Lexington has excellent smallmouth bass, redbreast sunfish and channel catfish.

James River

The James provides some excellent smallmouth bass, rock bass, and redbreast sunfish. It also has a good musky fishery; good channel catfish and a strong flathead catfish fishery is developing.

Jackson River

The Jackson is an excellent smallmouth bass and rock bass fishery above Lake Moomaw. Below the Gathright Dam some 18-19 miles are legally navigable with six public access sites. It has smallmouth bass and rock bass and it is being turned into a coldwater trout fishery. Brown and rainbow trout are being stocked and the river will be opened to trout fishing in the future.

Cowpasture River

The Cowpasture is legally navigable below U.S. 60, but there are no ramps. However, three U.S. Forest Service sections provide public bank access. Smallmouth, rock bass, muskies and redbreast sunfish can be caught in the Cowpasture.

Claytor Lake (Pulaski County)

The lake stretches for some 21 miles and consists of 4,475 acres of water.

Biologist Joe Williams regards Claytor Lake as a fantastic white bass fishery, producing 89 citations last year.

Striped bass are stocked annually by the Department. They seem to be growing faster up to four years than in other lakes, but then seem to slow down. Williams notes that striper fishing has become a night-time activity in recent years.

Walleye are stocked annually and samplings show that growth rates are good. Claytor has traditionally been a good flathead catfish lake with fish going up to 25 lbs. or more. Channel catfish are also abundant. Look for good catfish fishing from Lighthouse Bridge upstream.

Crappie have shown good growth rates and fish should be available in good numbers and good sizes. Big carp are also found in Claytor.

Claytor has largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass. In 1988, electrofishing samplings revealed the most bass 12 inches and up ever recorded. Three to five pound bass were common in some arms.

Claytor Lake State Park, located on the north side of the lake, provides 497 acres of camping, cottages and swimming beach, as well as a fine marina.

Gatewood Reservoir (Pulaski County)

Gatewood is a Town of Pulaski water supply impoundment, located in the Wythe Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest, just west of Pulaski. Williams says that this 162-acre lake is difficult to fish because it is so clear.

But, the lake has "fantastic bluegill and redear populations—some over a pound," says Williams.

Largemouth populations are good with average growth rates. Crappie are fairly abundant on the lake and can be caught around the numerous beaver lodges.

Every year, says Williams, three or

four 20-pound channel catfish are caught, usually at night.

Gatewood is a beautiful, scenic lake and a good family spot. Boats are available for rent and shorefishing is allowed. There's a well-run campground, and wilderness camping. No private boats are allowed and electric motors only can be used.

Travel west out of Pulaski on West Main Street; right on Magazine Street, then left on Mount Olivet Road.

Rural Retreat (Wythe County)

Rural Retreat is a 90-acre, Department-owned lake nestled in the hills of Wythe County. The big attraction here is musky and quite a few are caught annually. The lake has been managed as a brood stock supply for musky hatchery operations.

The lake provides fair to good largemouth bass fishing and has a 12-inch minimum size limit.

There is a boat ramp, shelter, campground, pool and concession. Electric motors only are allowed. The lake is open 24 hours a day. It is easily accessible from I-81 or Route 11 to Route 749; Route 677 and then Route 671.

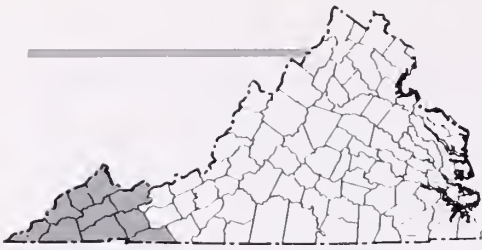
Rivers

New River

Musky is the highlight of New River angling. The majority are caught below Claytor Dam and downstream. A new state record came out of the New River in 1989. It weighed in at 45 lbs. even and was caught by Ron Underwood of Draper. "The New" recorded 56 musky citations in 1990. Walleyes run up the river out of Claytor Lake as early as February as do white bass in April and May.

In 1987, an 11-14 inch slot limit was imposed on smallmouth bass and reports indicate that their sizes are improving. A total of 76 citations were recorded. Below Claytor Dam, walleyes, stripers, white bass, catfish, largemouth bass and rock bass can be caught. The Department has a ramp below the dam between I-81 and the dam. Overall, the New River recorded 174 citations of 14 species.





South Holston Reservoir (Washington County)

This big TVA reservoir lies mostly in Tennessee, but the northern point of the 24 mile long, 7,580-acre body of water extends into southwestern Virginia some six miles, plus another few miles up the South Fork of the Holston River.

It's one of the better smallmouth bass impoundments in the southwest. There are some nice muskies, too.

One of the new developments is the walleye run up the South Fork of the Holston. They had been stocked in the reservoir in 1986 and each year thereafter and began showing up on angler's stringers and biologists' samplings in the spring of 1989.

White bass fishing should be good. There is now a creel limit of 25. Also, look for some excellent crappie, largemouth bass, channel catfish, and bluegills.

Anglers will find boat ramps and marinas at Wolf Creek, Wheeler's Dock and Spring Creek. Camping is available at Washington County Park. From I-81 at Abingdon, take Route 75 south to the lake.

Flannagan Reservoir (Dickenson County)

Flannagan is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lake located in Dickenson County. The 1143-acre impoundment is 13.6 miles long, with narrow, crooked arms and small creeks penetrating into high, rocky, forested banks.

Flannagan is a developing smallmouth bass fishery. It was stocked only one time about three years ago and has experienced good natural reproduction.

Flannagan has one of the better walleye populations in the state. Due to adequate natural forage, and because anglers are still learning to fish for walleye, not many are caught.

Other available species in Flannagan include largemouth bass, channel catfish, crappie, spotted bass and bluegills.

The reservoir is bordered on the west by the Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest. There are boat ramps near the dam overlook, near the confluence of the Pound and Cranesnest River arms, and near Poplar Branch on the east side of Cranesnest and Lower Twin Branch on the west side of Cranesnest.

The reservoir is located near Haysi and Clinchco off of Route 63 west from Haysi.

North Fork Pound Reservoir (Wise County)

If you want to get your name in the record books, Fish Biologist Assistant J. H. Jessee says to try North Fork Pound for spotted bass. Populations are shifting from largemouth bass to spotted bass, making North Fork Pound a top lake for that species.

Located in the Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest, the impoundment encompasses 154 acres with 13.5 miles of wooded shoreline. A National Forest Stamp is not required to fish the reservoir.

The lake has quality bluegill fishing and good crappie fishing. Muskies that were stocked a few years ago are reaching legal size, and showing excellent growth rates. Channel catfish have also been stocked and there are fair populations of smallmouth bass and redbreast sunfish, too.

There are boat ramps at Pound and Wise Landing, with campgrounds and picnicking at Canepatch, Phillips Creek, Hopkins Branch (primitive) and Laurel Fork.

To get to the lake, take U.S. 23 to Pound; turn west off of the bypass, onto Route 630 and a half mile north of Business Rt. 23. Follow 630 for a mile to the dam at Pound Landing.

Keokee Lake (Lee County)

Jessee rates this Department-owned lake as a "top quality" lake with good populations of largemouth bass and an "excellent bluegill fishery." Keokee is a 92-acre lake with wooded shores, located in the Clinch

Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest.

Channel catfish are regularly caught according to reports, says Jessee. "Redear sunfish are not numerous but the ones we have are good size—in the 9-10 inch range."

While there are some trails around the lake, shorefishing is difficult and boat fishing is almost a necessity. There is a boat ramp and restroom facilities maintained by the Forest Service. The lake is open 24 hours a day and a National Forest Stamp is required. There are no campground facilities at the lake. A 12-inch size limit is in effect on largemouth bass.

Keokee Lake is located near the village of Keokee in Lee County. Take Route 23 and Alternate 58 north from Big Stone Gap, then west on Route 68 to Route 623: then east on 623 to the lake.

Hungry Mother Lake (Smyth County)

The lake provides good largemouth fishing, quality bluegill and good crappie (up to 13 inches) fishing.

The 108-acre lake is located in Hungry Mother State Park just north of Marion in Smyth County. It is open 24 hours a day and camping is available on the 2180-acre park. Boats are rented during the day and a new boat ramp opened in 1990.

Hidden Valley Lake (Washington County)

This is a Department-owned impoundment in the Hidden Valley Wildlife Management Area in Washington County. Its 61 acres is nestled in the mountains at 3500 feet.

The lake was opened in 1990.

Fishing will be allowed 24 hours a day. No campground facilities are available and no camping is allowed within 100 yards of the lake shoreline. There is a primitive boat ramp for launching.

To get to Hidden Valley Lake, take Route 19 and Alternate 58 north, then onto Route 690 to the lake.

Laurel Bed Lake (Russell County)

Laurel Bed is a fee-fishing lake

located on the Clinch Mountain Wildlife Management Area in Russell County. This 300-acre lake lies in a formerly, boggy depression on the top of Clinch Mountain. It is surrounded by second growth red spruce, cedar and hemlock.

Jessee says that fingerling trout are stocked in November at a ratio of 3000 rainbows to 9000 brook trout.

A daily permit is required, which can be obtained from the concession at the entrance to the management area. There is a concrete boat ramp for private boats. No trout license is required during the fee-fishing season (opening day until Labor Day). After that, a trout license is required until closing on November 1.

Take Route 107 from Chilhowie to Saltville; turn left on Route 91 to Route 634 at Allison Gap; then left on Route 613 to Route 747, turn right and into the area.

Lake Witten (Tazewell County)

Witten is a new 52-acre Soil Conservation Service Lake in Tazewell County. Adult smallmouth bass and redbreast sunfish have been stocked along with largemouth bass.

A new boat ramp will be built and the lake will open June 15, 1991. The county plans facility development in the future.

Take Route 16 north out of Tazewell to Route 643, then to the lake.

Rivers

Clinch River

The Clinch River is a top musky stream. It produces a lot of muskies from its headwaters in Tazewell to the Tennessee border, "but anglers are closed mouth about it."

Recently, an 11-14 inch slot limit was instituted and should improve the quality of smallmouth bass fishing. The river was sampled from Scott to Russell in 1989 and high populations of smallmouths were found, but they were small. However, they had increased in abundance by 90 percent since the previous sampling.

Walleye introductions have been fairly successful in the upper portion of Scott and into Russell County. Water quality has also improved,

but resulted in decreased populations of gizzard shad. Redhorse populations remained constant and are a favorite target for those who shoot fish for sport, which is legal on this river in Scott County.

Powell River

The Powell is still suffering from sediment problems and coal mining pollution. The fishery is only fair at the present time. Virginia Tech is in the process of doing a study on the river. No continuous stocking has been in effect although some surplus walleyes have been added.

South Fork Holston

A good walleye run is developing, usually from mid-March through June 1. There is probably a resident population in the river up through Damascus. On February 2, 1990, a 13 lb. female measuring 29.5 inches was caught. Jessee says that an excellent forage base of gizzard and threadfin shad gives "high hopes" for some good walleye fishing in the future.

The river also hosts an excellent white bass run out of South Holston Reservoir, which begins in April and usually peaks in May. There are also some muskies that are hatchery escapees. The upper reaches of the river is trout water that is stocked with fingerling brown trout in Smyth County.

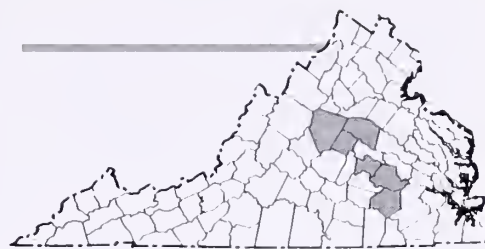
Middle Fork Holston

Fingerling trout stockings have been discontinued in the river's upper reaches. Downstream from Marion to the South Holston Reservoir smallmouth bass are fair. The river has some sedimentation problems and the Soil Conservation Service is working with landowners and dairy farmers to improve the situations.

North Fork Holston

From Saltville downstream, there is excellent smallmouth bass fishing with some going up to five pounds. The river also produces good channel catfish and redbreast sunfish.

Still under a health advisory from mercury poisoning back in the 60s, fish cannot be creeled from the river, but fishing is allowed. Hopefully, that ban may be lifted someday.



Chesdin Reservoir (Chesterfield County)

Lake Chesdin is a 3100-acre water supply reservoir.

Chesdin is a productive lake that offers good largemouth bass fishing, big crappies in spring and fall, big bluegills and channel catfish. There is a 12-15 inch slot limit on the large-mouths.

There is a public boat ramp off of Route 601 and several marinas with boat ramps, rental boats, camping and picnicking off of Routes 601, 36 and 623. From Richmond, take I-95 south to Colonial Heights; U.S. Route 1 to Route 36, then west.

Rivanna Reservoir (Albemarle County)

The 450-acre contains largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, pumpkinseed sunfish, crappie, channel catfish, walleye and northern pike.

One of the outstanding fisheries is the reservoir's channel catfish. Wall-eyes reaching three pounds have been recorded. It is located on Route 659 off Route 631 (Rio Road) in Charlottesville.

Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake

This 50-acre Department-owned lake is considered the area's best bluegill lake. Largemouth bass are good; walleye fair and there is good crappie fishing in the spring. Two artificial fish attractors made up of 100 cedar trees are marked by buoys.

It is a pleasing, scenic lake to fish, and is open 24 hours a day and has a good ramp, although steep.

Best time for crappies is April-May; largemouth bass in June-July and October-November; and big bluegills in May and deep in summer. The lake is on Route 619 off of Route 53 at Cunningham.

Powhatan Lakes (Powhatan County)

Powhatan Lakes are a pair of lakes of 35 and 31 acres located in the Powhatan Wildlife Management Area.

These lakes contain largemouth bass, crappie, bluegills, chain pickerel, channel catfish, pumpkinseed sunfish and redear sunfish. Crappie fishing has been especially productive in spring and fall. Two brush attractors have been sunk in the lake for the angler's benefit.

There are no facilities and only dirt ramps. Bank fishing is allowed. Electric motors only are allowed.

Powhatan Ponds (Powhatan County)

The Powhatan Ponds are three small ponds of nine, eight and two acres, also located on the Powhatan Wildlife Management Area. They contain largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, redear sunfish and pumpkinseed sunfish. Five largemouth bass per day can be creeled. Good place for kids to catch fish.

There is a ramp to launch carry-in carts and canoes only and only electrics are allowed.

Beaver Creek Reservoir (Albemarle County)

This scenic 104-acre lake has largemouth bass, bluegills, redears, pumpkinseed sunfish, channel catfish, walleye and northern pike. The lake has a good ramp but limited parking. Take Route 680 from Route 250-240 junction, west of Charlottesville.

Albemarle Lake (Albemarle County)

A few years ago, a 12-15 inch slot limit was put into effect on the 35-acre Department-owned lake, and angler reports are indicating that the largemouth fishery is improving.

Bluegill and crappies have always been of good sizes in this lake, and channel catfish and walleye are stocked regularly.

There is a gravel ramp for private boats and parking, one marked fish attractor and fishing is allowed from one hour before sunrise to 11:00 p.m.

From Routes 240-250 junction near Crozet, take 680 and 810 to Whitehall, then east to 614, then turn right on 675 to the lake.

Ragged Mountain Reservoirs (Albemarle County)

These two lakes total 50 acres and contain largemouth bass and bluegills. There is no drive-in access or boat ramp. Fishing is by permit only, and boats must be carried in.

Take Route 702 off Route 29. For permit information, call (804) 977-2970.

Chris Greene Reservoir (Albemarle County)

This 62-acre Albemarle County Parks lake has some good crappie fishing and a 12-15 inch slot limit should improve the bass fishery. The lake has a lot of sunfish, too. It's on Route 606, one mile from the airport.

Totier Creek (Albemarle County)

Totier Creek is a 66-acre Albemarle County Parks lake. Drained in 1985-86, it has been restocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, redear and channel catfish. Chain pickerel find their way into the lake through the spillway during high water. It's located off of Route 6 on Route 726 west of Scottsville.

Northeast Creek (Louisa County)

Northeast Creek is a 175-acre lake with about 30 acres of trees left standing in its bottom that provide excellent cover. The lake contains largemouth bass, bluegills, redear sunfish, crappie, chain pickerel and channel catfish.

There is a 15-inch minimum size limit on bass. The lake has a ramp and electrics only are allowed. Bank fishing is allowed in areas and the lake is open from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset.

Take Route 33 east for 4½ miles from Louisa Courthouse; the lake is on the left. For permit information, write the Louisa County Water Authority, P.O. Box 9, Louisa, Virginia 23093, (804) 520-9390.

Lakeview Reservoir (Chesterfield County)

Lakeview is a 42-acre lake with

largemouth bass, crappie, bluegills, channel catfish, redear and carp. There's a 12-inch minimum size limit on bass. There is a boat ramp with limited bank fishing and no facilities. Electric motors only are allowed.

Take Route 1 south to Lake Avenue; turn right and go .25 miles to Lakeview Park and ramp.

Swift Creek Lake (Chesterfield County)

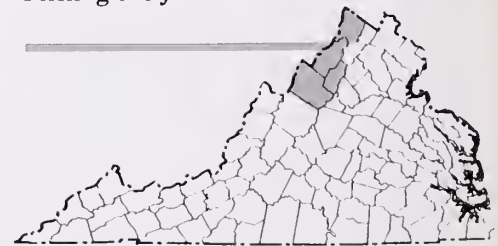
Swift Creek Lake (not reservoir) is a 107-acre lake located within the Pocahontas State Park. It has largemouth bass, bluegills and crappie, and there is a 12-inch minimum size limit on bass. Electrics only are allowed and there is a boat rental, bank fishing and picnic grounds.

Take Route 10 south to Route 655 (Beach Road) to Route 780.

Rivers

James River

The James produced 28 citation smallmouths in 1990. While anglers may find lower catch rates than on the Shenandoah, those caught will be larger. There is an 11-14 inch slot limit on smallmouths and largemouths. A good panfish fishery also exists on the river. Access is good, with many potential float trips and numerous liveries on the river from Scottsville to Richmond. Send to the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries for the pamphlet "Float Fishing the James."



Frederick County (Wheatlands) Lake

Frederick County Lake is a 117-acre Department-owned lake with a ramp for private boats and a boat rental concession.

The lake has high populations of small largemouth bass and some 3/4-lb bluegills. Other species include redear, channel catfish and walleyes.

The lake is six miles north of Front Royal off Routes 340/522. Fishing hours are one hour before sunrise to 11:00 p.m.

Lake Shenandoah (Rockingham County)

This Department-owned, 36-acre lake is surrounded by agricultural land and has been a troublesome lake to manage due to siltation, aquatic vegetation and stunted panfish problems.

Grass carp have brought the vegetation under control and walleyes will be stocked to prey on the large populations of small sunfish. An 18-inch, one largemouth bass per day limit has been instituted to build up the largemouth bass populations.

Muskies are still present in the lake and provide some good fishing. Channel catfish and black crappie are also present. There is a ramp for private boats. The lake is six miles east of Harrisonburg off Route 33 on Route 276.

Lake Arrowhead (Luray)

Lake Arrowhead is a 39-acre Town of Luray lake that has largemouth bass, sunfish and channel catfish, and is stocked with northern pike. There is a boat ramp and picnic grounds and it is located east of Luray via Routes 667 and 669.

Skidmore Reservoir (Rockingham County)

This is a 118-acre City of Harrisonburg Reservoir located in the George Washington National Forest. It is a put-n-grow lake, with brook trout and some brown trout being stocked as fingerlings each year. The lake provides excellent fishing year-round. Brookies up to 3 lbs. have been caught. There are no facilities, and the lake is accessible only by a forest road off of Route 33 west of Harrisonburg.

Silver Lake (Rockingham County)

Silver Lake is a 10-acre City of Harrisonburg lake that is stocked with trout, but has some largemouth bass as well. There are no facilities. Take Route 42 west of Harrisonburg

to Dayton, then Route 701 north-west of Dayton.

Rivers

South Fork Shenandoah

The South Fork contains smallmouth and largemouth bass, rock bass, redbreast sunfish, bluegill and channel catfish. The 11-14 inch slot limit on smallmouth bass has improved the quality of the fishery. Bass are abundant and catch rates are high. Panfishing is excellent.

There is a health advisory from the Department of Health from Port Republic to the Page/Warren County Line, and from Route 619 Bridge near Front Royal downstream. The South Fork has an excellent access for boats and canoes at a variety of places. There are also numerous liveries on the South Fork.

North Fork Shenandoah

The North Fork has a good smallmouth bass and redbreast sunfish fishery. It's a smaller stream than the South Fork, and has some developed ramps and with fewer access points, trips are a little harder to plan. There is a health advisory downstream from Passage Creek.

Shenandoah (Mainstream)

The Shenandoah is under a health advisory from the confluence of the North and South Forks to the West Virginia State Line. Fishing is still allowed and remains excellent. The river produces good smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, rock bass, redbreast sunfish and channel catfish.



Chickahominy Reservoir (Charles/City County)

This lake continues to be the best largemouth bass lake in the area, according to Fish Biologist Dean Fowler. The 1,500-acre Newport News City Reservoir is about 8 miles long and relatively shallow. The min-

imum size limit on largemouth is 12 inches. It produced 13 citations in 1990.

In addition to largemouth bass, Chickahominy has some good redear sunfish opportunities as well as bluegill, yellow perch, chain pickerel, crappie, channel catfish and white perch.

There are a number of private marinas, boat ramps and boat rentals that provide access to the lake but no public access.

Waller Mill Reservoir (Williamsburg)

Waller Mill is a 360-acre lake owned by the city of Williamsburg. The clear-water lake is located in the 1,500-acre Waller Mill Park which provides a good concrete ramp, boat, canoe and accessories rentals and a minimal fee to fish. No gasoline motors. There are also picnic and restroom facilities and nature trails to make it a family attraction.

The lake has a good striped bass population, and there have been a number of fish in the 15-26 pound range caught.

Largemouth bass are a little below average in size but an occasional five pounder shows up. The lake also has some big yellow perch in addition to crappie, chain pickerel and channel catfish.

The park closes about mid-December and normally opens in early-March. Waller Mill is off of Route 645 (Airport Road) between U.S. 60 and I-64.

Little Creek (Toano) Reservoir (James City County)

Little Creek Reservoir has a fair walleye population with some going up to seven pounds. The lake has average largemouth bass and bluegills and some decent channel catfish and crappie.

Little Creek is a 996-acre Newport News City Reservoir with very clear water. The ramp and boat rental concession is administered by the county and a fee is charged. No gasoline motors allowed. From U.S. 60 Toano, take Route 610 to Lakeview Drive.

Lee Hall Reservoir (Newport News)

Lee Hall (Newport News City Reservoir) is a 230-acre lake with forested shores, located in Newport News City Park. It's an average fishery for largemouth bass and sunfish. Other species in the lake are white perch, chain pickerel, crappie and yellow perch.

Lee Hall is another excellent family spot. There is a small fee required to fish. It's located off of Route 143, via Lee Hall or Route 105 exits from I-64.

Diascund Reservoir (New Kent/ James City County)

The 1,700-acre Diascund Reservoir has largemouth bass, crappie, pickerel, and bluegills.

There is a concession for boat rentals and bait and tackle. Electric motors only are allowed and there is no bank fishing. Check with the Newport News Department of Parks and Recreation for additional information. Take Route U.S. 60 from Providence Forge off of Route 603.

Harwoods Mill Reservoir (York County)

Harwoods Mill (244 acres) has good numbers of northern pike and channel catfish populations, average largemouth bass and crappie and below average bluegill.

Being a water-supply reservoir, it is treated with copper sulphate which limits fish growth and production. There is a concession and ramp where boats can be rented. It's located on Route 173, east off of U.S. 17.

Gardy's Mill Pond (Northumberland County)

This old mill pond of 75 acres, with a rebuilt dam and a newly designed spillway, was reopened in February 1990.

Largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, channel catfish and chain pickerel are present in good numbers. This Department-owned lake has a concrete ramp and service pier. It's located on Route 202 west of Callao near the Westmoreland/Northumberland County Line.

Lake Maury (Newport News)

Lake Maury is owned by the Mariner's Museum. This 165-acre lake has been stocked with stripers in the past, and more recently with northern pike in order to control the stunted populations of bluegills and white perch.

No private boats are allowed, but boats can be rented at the lake. The lake is closed during the winter months.

Chandler's Mill Pond (Westmoreland County)

This Department-owned lake of 75 acres has limited access and boats must be carried to the lake. Largemouth bass populations are good as are crappies and the lake also has a small population of fliers. It's located on Route 3 just south of Westmoreland State Park.

Harrison Lake (Charles City County)

Harrison Lake is an 82-acre lake located just above the Lake Harrison National Fish Hatchery. The lake had been drawn down a couple of years ago in order to rebuild the dam and construct a fishway to enable herring to pass over the dam.

High populations of warmouth, bluegill, redear and largemouths are present and in 1991 the lake should provide some better fishing.

There is a gravel and rubble ramp and gas motors up to five horsepower are allowed.

Rivers

James River

The James River has an outstanding largemouth bass population as does the Appomattox River and its other tributary creeks. It also produces some excellent blue and channel catfish from roughly Charles City to Richmond. White perch are also caught in good numbers all the way to the I-95 Bridge, as are some wall-eyes. In 1990 the James led the state with 549 citations of 16 species. It led in blue cat citations with 114, and channel cats with 72. It also recorded 154 white perch and its upper reaches produced 28 smallmouth citations in 1990.

Anadromous striper fishing was fair during the open season in the fall of 1990. The best locations were at the mouth of the Chickahominy River, and the James River Bridge. The Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) is planning to open the season again in the fall of 1991. For information on anadromous species, contact Virginia Marine Resources in Newport News at (804) 247-2200.

Chickahominy River

Largemouth bass remain excellent on "The Chick." Yellow perch, white perch, chain pickerel and channel catfish are all available. Seasonally, the herring run at Walker's Dam and tidal striped bass throughout the river draw a lot of attention. Numerous private ramps and marinas provide access to the Chickahominy, as well as the public landing at the Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area in Charles City County.

Mattaponi River

The Mattaponi River has excellent water quality and in fact is one of the cleanest lowland rivers in the country. There is little or no development or industry on the river, only low level agriculture which does not add much in the way of silt or nutrients. The river has outstanding channel and white catfish, especially upstream from Waterfence Landing and particularly from Melrose Landing and up to Walkerton.

It hosts an outstanding run of big yellow perch in spring as well as white perch. Above Aylett, redbreast sunfish will start showing up and shad and herring are also found in good numbers in the spring. The Mattaponi overall produced 91 citations of nine species in 1990, 63 of them being yellow perch. The river has public accesses at West Point, Waterfence, Melrose, Walkerton and Aylett.

Pamunkey River

The Pamunkey hosts runs of shad and herring, though not in the numbers it used to, as well as anadromous stripers. It has an outstanding channel and white catfish fisher-

ies and some of the best white perch and yellow perch fishing in the state. The big river gave up 184 citation white perch, which led the state in 1990. Overall it produced 267 citations of eight species.

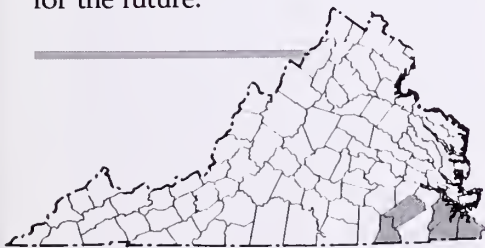
There are some largemouth bass and crappies in the backwater sloughs, and above Highway 360, redbreast sunfish, smallmouth bass and spotted bass begin to show up. There are public ramps at Lestor Manor downstream of the Indian reservation and at West Point, and a private ramp at Old Church for a fee. For the most part, public access to the Pamunkey is poor.

Rappahannock River

The Rappahannock has outstanding blue catfish and excellent channel catfish. It has produced the two biggest blue cats taken in the state. Best fishing in the district is from Port Royal to Fredericksburg. In 1990, 260 citations came out of the Rappahannock of nine different species. Included among them were 53 blue catfish, including a fish that tied the existing state record; 97 white perch and 45 yellow perch. The river also produced largemouth bass, bluegills, crappie, white perch and anadromous stripers, herring and shad.

Piankatank/Dragon Run

Farther upstream the Piankatank becomes Dragon Run, a very scenic river through cypress and heavily forested areas. Anadromous stripers run the river and the river has redbreast sunfish, crappie, largemouth bass and bluegills. Barring excessive development or fishing pressure, these rivers will be a great resource for the future.



Western Branch (Suffolk)

Western Branch is stocked with muskies, stripers and walleyes every year. Growth rates, for the most part, are average.

Fisheries Biologist Ron Southwick says the lake has a good striped bass population—with stripers over 20 pounds present.

Muskies in the lake are stocked mainly as a trophy fish, and largemouth bass are abundant and provide excellent fishing.

Southwick says that white perch, yellow perch, bluegill and redbreast sunfish are "excellent."

The lake has two ramps, one just below the Burnt Mills Lake Dam off of Route 603 near Everetts and a ramp and concession just below the Lake Prince Dam off Route 605 near Providence Church on U.S. Route 460. The lake is owned by the City of Norfolk which requires annual and daily permits for private boats and to fish. Contact either the City of Norfolk or the concessionaire for information.

Lake Prince (Suffolk)

Lake Prince is a 777-acre lake with numerous long, narrow coves extending out from the main body of the lake.

Prince is stocked annually with stripers and has developed into a good fishery. Striped bass of 20 pounds are not uncommon. Prince gave up citation stripers last year.

Prince has good largemouth bass, bluegill and redbreast sunfish populations, black crappie and some big chain pickerel are found in the lake, too.

There is a fish station and boat ramp located off of U.S. 460 at Providence Church on Route 604 (Lake Prince Road) in Suffolk. The same costs apply to Lake Prince as to Western Branch.

Lake Whitehurst (Virginia Beach/Norfolk)

This 458-acre lake is a sister lake to Lake Smith which is separated by Northampton Boulevard (Route 13) in Virginia Beach. Lake Whitehurst has become a walleye hotspot with many fish in the 4-6 lb. range and one of the few lakes where anglers have caught walleyes consistently.

The lake still has some hybrid stripers from earlier stockings. Whitehurst has more largemouth bass in

the 2-6 lb. range than any other lake in the district and several citation bass are caught each year there. There are also good channel catfish populations. Other species include black crappie, bluegill, white perch and redbreast. Overall, Whitehurst yielded 45 citations of 7 species in 1990.

There are two ramps on the lake, a dirt ramp at Northampton Boulevard across from the Lake Smith Fishing Station and a ramp at Azalea Gardens. A Norfolk City boat permit is required to get a permit to launch and fish.

Lake Smith (Virginia Beach)

Lake Smith, across from Lake Whitehurst, is similar but lacks deep water. Its 222 acres average only 5 ft. in depth. Like Whitehurst, it has mostly wooded shores, and is highly productive.

Largemouth bass populations are good and the opportunity to catch a citation is there. The average size largemouth is larger than in any other area lakes, except Whitehurst.

The lake also has walleyes, channel catfish, crappies, white perch and bluegill. Boat rentals and permits are available at the Lake Smith Fishing Station.

Lake Trashmore (Virginia Beach)

Southwick tells us not be deterred by the name of this lake, because it produces some excellent fishing. Most fish are caught from shore. It is a deep, 52-acre lake, with a sharp, sloping bottom. A few small tire reef structures had been put out in the past, plus two, large, triangle tire reefs as fish attractors. It's open year-round to shorefishing. Boats can be rented from late-spring to early-fall. No private boats are allowed.

It is stocked with stripers and walleyes and has been stocked in the past with channel catfish and redears. Citation stripers, walleyes, largemouths and channel catfish have been taken out of Trashmore.

Lake Trashmore is located within Mount Trashmore City Park in Virginia Beach off of the Virginia Beach Expressway (Route 44) at the Pembroke Exit. The park has picnic shel-

ters, grills, restrooms, playground and a concession.

Lake Cohoon (Suffolk)

Lake Cohoon is a 510-acre water supply reservoir for the City of Portsmouth. It is known as one of the Portsmouth Lakes.

Cohoon is an excellent largemouth bass, crappie, chain pickerel and redear sunfish lake. Forty-three citations came out of Cohoon in 1990. The Cohoon-Meade Fishing Station provides a boat ramp and boat rentals.

Gas motors up to 10 horsepower are allowed. Permits are required and are available from the station which is located on Route 604 (Pitch Kettle Road) off Route 58 in Suffolk.

Lake Meade (Suffolk)

Located just below the Cohoon Dam and serviced by the same fishing station, Lake Meade is a 512-acre water supply reservoir for Portsmouth.

Striped bass are stocked annually, providing a good striper fishery. The lake also provides very good largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, gar and redear fishing.

Lake Kilby (Suffolk)

The 222-acre Lake Kilby has big bluegills, redears, largemouth bass, crappie and chain pickerel. Fliers flourish in the dark waters and northern pike are still being stocked.

There are no boat rentals but a ramp is available for private boats. Permits are available at the Cohoon-Meade Fishing Station.

Burnt Mills (Isle of Wight County)

This is another Norfolk City Water Supply Reservoir located in Suffolk and Isle of Wight. It consists of 610 acres with forested shores and a lot of stumps.

The lake has excellent largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, chain pickerel and yellow perch. It produced a total of 55 citations in 1990.

Equipped with a dirt ramp and limited parking, private boat and fishing permits must be obtained from the Western Branch Fishing Station.

Speight's Run (Suffolk)

Speight's Run is a 197-acre lake that overflows into Lake Kilby. The necessary permits must be obtained from the Cohoon-Meade Fishing Station. The lake is separated into two sections.

Speight's Run has more largemouth bass than any other lake in the district. Most are about a pound, but several in the 6-10 lb. range were collected in 1990. The lake also has more large bluegill, redear and crappie than any other lake in the district.

There is a dirt ramp with limited parking.

Lake Airfield (Sussex County)

Lake Airfield is a 105-acre lake with a large watershed, surrounded by mixed pine and hardwood forests.

Its acid-stained waters contain largemouth bass, crappie, chain pickerel, fliers, bluegills and yellow perch.

Lake Drummond (Chesapeake/Suffolk)

Lake Drummond is a bowl-shaped acid-type water. Its 3,142 acres can get very treacherous in strong winds.

The only access to the lake is by feeder ditch off of the Dismal Swamp Canal from a ramp on Route 17. It is three miles up the ditch to a lock and a self-operated winch that pulls boats up over a dam into the lake. It is managed and serviced by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The lake has crappie, yellow perch, chain pickerel and fliers. Crappies are best in March and April.

Back Bay (Virginia Beach)

Back Bay still produces excellent white perch and channel catfish along with some flounder and other salt-water species. The freshwater creeks feeding into the Bay have excellent populations of largemouth bass, bluegills and crappie. The Bay gave up a total of 74 citations in 1990.

Lone Star Lakes (Suffolk)

The Lone Star Lakes are a series of 12 lakes or ponds varying in size from a few acres up to 49 acres. They were originally marl pits and all are interconnected. They are surrounded by 1,172 acres of land that provide picnicking and hiking.

The lakes vary from brackish to deep, crystal clear to shallow, dark-stained waters. The upper or northern lakes are deep and clear and the lower lakes are shallow and stump-filled.

Among the best are Crane Lake which opens into Chuckatuck Creek. It has a good population of striped bass, largemouth bass, bluegills, and crappie.

Butler Tract, Crystal and Annette lakes are stocked with walleyes and northern pike annually, and also contain largemouth bass, bluegills and white perch.

Cedar Lake has largemouth bass, crappie and bluegills, while Lake Wahoo and Southern Lake contain largemouth bass, crappie and bluegills and are stocked with northern pike.

The lakes are difficult to fish due to the steep shores, but they produce excellent fishing.

All the lakes have boat ramps. Some are dirt, some paved, some steep and some shallow. No boats are rented and electric motors only are allowed.

Rivers

Nottoway River

The Nottoway is a scenic, undeveloped river that provides excellent fishing for a variety of species. The river begins in Nottoway County and drains into the Chowan River in North Carolina.

It has a diverse fishery from smallmouth bass to shad and herring. The river provides excellent largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, redbreast sunfish, channel catfish, yellow perch, chain pickerel, crappie and Roanoke River rock bass.

The Roanoke rock bass is a species of special concern in Virginia. Only a few rivers have them, but the Nottoway has quite a few and they run fairly large. The Nottoway produced 117 citations overall with 96 rock bass leading the pack.

There are boat ramps and canoe access points at Carey's Bridge, Peter's Bridge, Hercules Landing and Route 258 near Riverdale. Water level information can be obtained

from the city of Norfolk or the State Water Control Board.

Blackwater River

The Blackwater flows from Surry into the Nottoway to form the Chowan. It hosts a run of herring in spring. It has good populations of largemouth bass, bluegills, crappie and chain pickerel. It produced 49 citations of 11 species in 1990. A scenic river, it flows through picturesque swamps and is considered excellent for canoeing. Ramps are available in the town of Franklin. Canoe access is available at several bridge crossings.

Meherrin River

Downstream from Emporia Dam the river offers a variety of species. Good runs of American shad occur in the spring. Good numbers of bluegills, crappie, channel cats, largemouth bass and occasional smallmouth bass and walleye are also present. Water is typically muddy and water level fluctuates dramatically with rainfall and hydroelectric power generation.

Northwest River

The Northwest River in Chesapeake and Virginia Beach is another scenic river with undeveloped, forested banks. It has good largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, white perch and channel catfish populations. There is a boat ramp in Northwest River Park.

North Landing River

North Landing River in Virginia Beach and Chesapeake provides good white perch, channel catfish, crappie, yellow perch, largemouth bass and bluegill fishing. Forty-one citation rock bass came out of North Landing last year. Overall it produced 72 citations of nine species.

Boats can be launched at North Landing, West Landing Road, Pungo Ferry and Munden Point Park.

Buggs Island (Charlotte/Halifax/Mecklenburg Counties)

Regional Fisheries Manager A. L. "Bud" LaRoche and Biologist Bill Kittrell report that surveys on largemouth bass show they are averaging 2 1/2 lbs. and show consistently excellent reproduction. Best fishing is on the upper end of the lake and lower end creeks. Structure is critical and water fluctuations affect structure.

Buggs Island consistently produces citation striped bass, and white bass are booming, averaging about a pound. Best fishing for white bass is in spring with males moving upriver in about the third week in March, peaking in the first two weeks of April. They are caught all summer, as far down as North Bend Park.

Buggs Island is probably the best crappie lake in Virginia with blacks averaging about 1/2 pound and whites about a pound.

Gaston Reservoir (Brunswick/Mecklenburg Counties)

Located just below Buggs Island in the Staunton River system, Gaston remains an excellent largemouth bass lake. Striped bass remain good and continue to produce citations.

Walleyes show a strong population with limited natural reproduction. Gaston also has good-sized crappies, 1 lb. average white perch, channel catfish, chain pickerel and bluegill. Overall, the lake produced 141 citations of 9 species last year.

Briery Creek (Prince Edward County)

Briery Creek, located near Farmville, is largely a catch-and-release largemouth bass fishery. This Department lake shows excellent reproduction but the expected big fish are not showing up. Beginning on January 1, 1991, a new 12-15 inch slot limit with five per day creel limit was introduced.

The lake has an excellent chain pickerel fishery, with samplings regularly showing 3 lb. fish.

Channel catfish are doing well, with several in the 7-9 lb. category being caught.

Crappies are a developing fishery.

Bluegills and redears in the 1/2 to 3/4 lb. range are common.

Up to 10 horsepower gas motors are allowed. The lake opens one hour before sunrise and closes one hour after sunset. An improved access road was built in 1990 and a concrete ramp will be built this year.

Nottoway Lake (Nottoway County)

Nottoway is a Department lake with a lot of standing timber and abundant largemouth bass populations. The high bass population keeps bluegills and redears in check, resulting in a fantastic sunfish fishery with numerous fish in the 1/3 to 1/2 lb. range.

Crappie are fair, showing an average of about 1/4 lb. Channel catfish are stocked every other year, and the lake has a good chain pickerel population.

Amelia Lake (Amelia County)

Located in the Amelia Wildlife Management Area, the lake has abundant largemouth populations. A 12-15 inch slot limit on largemouth bass should improve size and numbers.

Bluegills and redear are good, with fish averaging about 1/3 lb. Crappies are fair and channel catfish are stocked every other year.

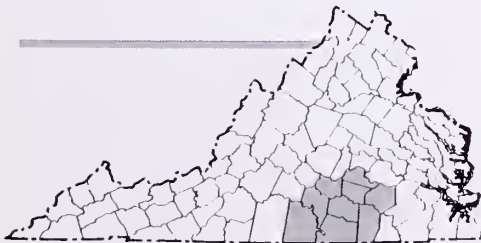
Walleye are stocked on alternating years, and are mostly concentrated in the deeper water near the dam.

Amelia has a ramp, restroom facilities and a floating fishing pier that provides fishing opportunities for the handicapped and other shore-bound anglers.

Lake Connor (Halifax County)

Connor is a 110-acre Game Department lake that came into prominence when some big largemouth bass started showing up. Some years ago the lake was stocked with Florida strain bass. They apparently hybridized with the northern largemouths resulting in a number of "monster" bass, including the present state record largemouth of 16 lbs. 4 oz.

However, the lake's small size may strain the lake's bass fishery if it receives too much pressure. Thus, the lake now has a 15-inch minimum size limit on bass.



Connor also has tremendous bluegill and redear populations. Crappies are doing well and channel catfish are stocked on alternating years.

Lake Gordon (Mecklenburg County)

This Game Department lake has good largemouth bass and sunfish populations; fair crappie populations. It also has chain pickerel and is a very good channel catfish lake. The lake has a ramp with limited parking.

Lake Brunswick (Brunswick County)

This Game Department lake is a good sunfish lake with bluegill and redear in "keeper" sizes. It's also a good largemouth lake in terms of numbers, but they are mostly small.

Crappie populations are good and they average about 10 inches. The lake also has some good-sized yellow perch.

Fort Pickett Lakes (Nottoway/Dinwiddie Counties)

A permit is required from the Fort Pickett Resources Office to fish the many ponds and lakes on Fort Pickett located east of Blackstone. They contain largemouth bass, sunfish, crappie and channel catfish.

Pickett Reservoir is best for largemouth bass and Twin Lake has an excellent population of nice-sized bluegills.

Rivers

Appomattox River

The Appomattox in this district has Kentucky spotted bass! They were introduced in the mid-70s and expanded into the tributaries. It has a wide range of species including redbreast sunfish, bluegill, flier, crappie, pickerel and smallmouth bass.

Dan River

The Dan offers a seasonal fishery for striped bass, white bass, channel catfish and flathead catfish can be caught all year round.

Meherrin/Nottoway Rivers

Look for Roanoke rock bass, largemouth bass and a variety of sunfish in these rivers.

Hycro River

This river provides a seasonal

fishery for white bass and year-round for catfish. It produces some big largemouth bass and nice crappie in spring.

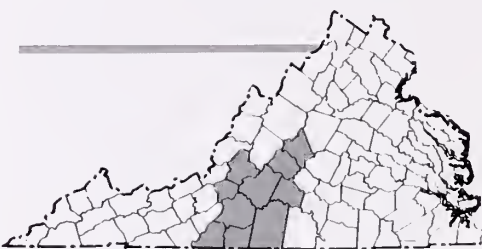
Bowfishing for gar in Aaron's Creek is a unique fishery.

Bannister River

The Bannister provides a seasonal fishery for white bass in spring and catfish all year.

James River and Tributaries

The James, of course, is well known for its smallmouth bass, musky and redbreast sunfish in this district.



Smith Mountain Lake (Bedford, Franklin, Pittsylvania Counties)

The largemouth bass fishery on Smith Mountain Lake has come a long way, according to Fisheries Biologist Mike Duval. "It's the best it's been since the 70s."

The striper fishery has to be the most notable fishery on Smith Mountain Lake. According to Duval, this spring should produce many 22-24 inch fish.

Some 50,000 walleye fingerlings are stocked every other year. A few anglers are fishing for and catching numerous citations every year.

The Blackwater and Gills Creek arms are tops in producing muskies and the big reservoir gives up some big ones each year.

Smallmouth bass have improved as habitat has improved with better water quality. Crappie are best on the upper ends of the reservoir where the structure is. White bass are also abundant.

Philpott Reservoir (Franklin/Henry/Patrick Counties)

Smallmouth bass, walleye and trout are the main attractions here. McConaughy strain rainbow trout are running 3 to 5 lbs.; anglers troll 45 to 50 feet deep for trout, often at

night. Brown trout should be coming on strong in two or three years.

Smallmouth bass are caught deep in summer, often at night, 20-30 feet deep, and average two or three pounds.

Walleyes have been stocked on alternating years and are reproducing naturally.

Other opportunities included crappie, channel catfish, largemouth bass and redbreast sunfish.

Carvin's Cove (Botetourt/Roanoke Counties)

Citation largemouth bass and crappies are plentiful in this lake. Many striped bass 20 pounds and up have come out of the lake, with some 30 pounds or more being reported. Carvin's Cove is a scenic lake with a boat ramp and picnic area.

Leesville Reservoir (Campbell/Pittsylvania Counties)

Striped bass are doing well here and fishing pressure is starting to increase.

White bass are averaging a pound and offering some great fishing.

Crappie are good at certain times of the year, but cover for them is limited due to water fluctuations. Samplings of walleyes in 1988 showed fish averaging 3 lbs., and largemouth bass had a good spawning season that year.

Lake Burton (Pittsylvania County)

Lake Burton has an excellent largemouth bass fishery with many six pound-plus fish showing up in the 1989 samples.

Channel catfish are doing very well with fish up to 12 pounds and nice crappies with some 3 pounders showing up in spring samplings.

This 76-acre Department lake has a good boat ramp and is located six miles north of Callands via route 969 and 800.

Lake Nelson (Nelson County)

Nelson is a Game Department lake located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge, south of Lovingston via Highway 29 to Colleen and Route 655 to Arrington then left on Route 812.

Recent samplings show that the bass size structure is improving with the new 12-15 inch slot limit of the past three years. Bass sizes are larger and numbers are up.

The lake provides some good channel catfish with up to 20 pounders being caught. Black crappie and bluegills are also available.

There are some fish attractors marked with buoys. The lake is under new concession management with boat rentals and a boat ramp available.

Fairystone Lake (Patrick County)

Fairystone Lake, located in Fairystone State Park is showing good numbers of big largemouth bass.

Fairystone is a 168-acre lake with a good amount of cover. Park personnel have been building fish shelters each year to add to the cover.

Bluegill samplings show good numbers and good sizes. Crappies are generally small.

Martinsville (Beaver Creek) Reservoir (Henry County)

Martinsville Reservoir is an underutilized fishery located north of Martinsville. Samplings showed good numbers of largemouth bass in the 12-20 inch range.

The 175-acre reservoir is stocked annually with 500-600 northern pike and also contains crappie, bluegill, redear and channel catfish.

There is a ramp and a lot of bank fishing space available.

Thrasher/Stonehouse/Mill Creek Impoundments (Amherst County)

These lakes are Soil Conservation Service flood control lakes. All three are close together and somewhat similar in characteristics.

Largemouth bass populations are low and fish are small, with a few running 12-13 inches. Sunfish growth is good and the channel catfish fishery is excellent, with five to seven pound fish showing up in samplings from the 34-acre Thrasher and 34-acre Stonehouse.

Mill Creek is the newest and largest lake at 189 acres, and is a developing fishery.

All three lakes are family-oriented and provide picnic grounds, playgrounds, restrooms and shorefishing opportunities. There is a boat ramp at each lake, open during daylight only.

White Oak Mountain WMA Ponds (Pittsylvania County)

Five fishable ponds varying in size from ½ to 7 acres provide limited largemouth bass and bluegill fishing. Cartops only can be used on the 7-acre Pete's Pond while the rest are bankfishing only.

The wildlife management area is located east of Chatham off Route 832.

Rivers Smith River

Fishing is available from the Philpott Dam downriver to Kohler. The river had a strong year-class of brown trout in 1988 and currently are in the 10-11 inch range. This followed two bad reproductive years in 1986-87.

The river is also stocked with rainbows from the dam to the upper end of the special regulations area.

James River

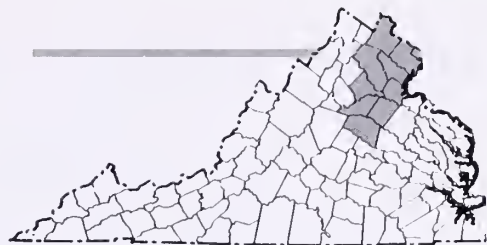
From Eagle Rock to Howardsville, smallmouths and muskies are good. Flathead catfish are showing up strong on the upper end.

Staunton River

The Staunton provides a prime seasonal fishery. Stripers can be caught from early-April to early-June. More fish should show up at the Leesville tailrace where a special fishing access catwalk has been built. Anglers use bucktails, shad-like crankbaits and live shad for bait.

Walleyes are the coming fishery. The Staunton is consistently producing eight-pound fish. Some of the best fishing is from mid-December into March.

There are public ramps at Brookneal and Long Island in Halifax County, and at the Gaging Station near Mount Laurel on Route 746 and off Route 360 near Clover in Halifax County.



Lake Anna (Louisa, Spotsylvania Counties)

This 9,600-acre lake has several marinas, campgrounds, public ramps and a state park.

Stripers, walleyes, largemouth bass, crappie, yellow perch, white perch, chain pickerel and channel catfish make up the menu. Lake Anna produced 17 largemouth citations in 1990.

Virginia Power has sunk a number of brush and block fish shelters to the benefit of fish and angler alike.

Look for the best largemouth bass and striped bass fishing in spring and fall. There is a 12-15 inch slot limit on largemouth bass and a 20-inch minimum on stripers.

The public ramps on Lake Anna are the Lake Anna Ramp on Route 522 near the Spotsylvania-Orange County Lines, and at Lake Anna State Park, on Route 601 off Route 208. There is a catwalk for handicapped and shorebound anglers at the Third Dike on Route 652.

Occoquan Reservoir (Fairfax/Prince William Counties)

Occoquan is a 2,100-acre Fairfax County Water Authority Lake. The lake contains largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, channel catfish, flathead catfish, white perch, and some white bass and hybrids. Fisheries Biologist Ed Steinkoenig says there are still a few hybrid stripers in the lake, some of which have reached the seven to 10-lb. size. Walleyes have been coming down the watershed from Lake Manassas and appear to be doing very well. Crappies get big in Occoquan as do flathead catfish. Largemouth bass have a minimum 14-inch size limit.

Ramps and facilities can be found at Fountainhead Park near Woodbridge off of Route 123 to Route 647. More information is available

from the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (703) 250-9124.

Germantown Lake (Fauquier County)

This 109-acre Fauquier County Parks and Recreation lake is located in C. M. Crockett Park on Rte 643 off Rt. 28. Because it is a new lake, fishing should be especially good because it contains more adult fish than it will ever have again.

The lake contains bass, bluegill, black crappie, channel catfish and blue catfish. Both Florida strain and northern strain largemouths have been stocked with some going over 4 pounds already. Black crappie are about three quarters of a pound and bluegills a half a pound. It has full facilities and a daily entrance fee is charged. There's a 15-inch size limit on bass and a creel limit of two per day. For information, call (703) 788-4867.

Mott's Run Reservoir (Spotsylvania County)

Steinkoenig considers Motts Run the best bluegill lake in Northern Virginia. Motts Run is a water supply reservoir just west of Fredericksburg. It's a deep, steep-sided, 160-acre body of water that normally has only moderate fishing pressure.

The only development it has is the boat ramp and rental concession. The area around the ramp has toilet facilities and a picnic grounds. Electric motors only are allowed. Daily or seasonal permits are required and available from the concession.

The lake has largemouth bass, crappie, channel catfish, white perch, bluegills and flier. There are northern pike too, and in September 1989, Duke Gardner of Fredericksburg took a 27 lb. 9 oz. state record out of Motts.

Channel catfish are stocked on alternating years. The lake is tough to fish, being clean of structure, steep-sided and deep. An angler has to find the underwater islands. Two fish attractors have been built and are marked with buoys.

The rental facility and ramp opens in late-March or early-April and closes in early-October. For infor-

mation call (703) 786-8989, or (703) 372-1082.

Lake Curtis (Stafford County)

Curtis is a Department-owned lake of 91 acres. Curtis Memorial Park is another fine family facility which provides a swimming pool, grills, picnic tables and boat rentals.

Originally, the lake was stocked with the usual complement of largemouth bass, bluegills and channel catfish. There are remnants of northern pike and tiger muskies from previous stockings.

The largemouth bass have grown big with fish up to 13 pounds coming out of the lake.

The Department has a boat ramp just off of Route 662 across the lake from the park. Eventually, the park will build a full service concession.

Lake Curtis is west of Fredericksburg via Route 17 to Route 616. Turn right (north) and go to Route 662 and turn left (west) to the ramp. For information, call (703) 752-5632.

Lake Orange (Orange County)

This 124-acre Department-owned lake is intensively managed. The lake is regularly fertilized to increase food production for the fish. A floating fishing pier serves the handicapped and shorebound anglers and marked fish attractors help anglers in boats.

Steinkoenig said there are good numbers of crappies, but they are small. Bluegills are abundant too, and largemouth bass are good. There are lots of walleyes in the 2-3 lb. class. There are also an abundance of 2 lb. channel catfish.

The lake vaulted to prominence in 1989 when Ron Sprouse caught a 6 lb. 13 oz. state record white bass which was recognized as a world record. Orange is not noted for having white bass and it's speculated that it may have been a stray from previous stockings.

There is a new concession, picnic shelter, tables, grills, restrooms, boat rentals, and shorefishing. Orange is located off of Route 629 from either Route 522 or Route 20.

Burke Lake (Fairfax County)

Burke is a 218-acre lake within Burke Lake Park.

Black crappies average a half pound, and bluegills average a quarter pound. Burke has some nice walleyes, but they are seldom caught. Channel catfish average about two pounds and there are a few largemouth bass, redear and pumpkinseed sunfish as well. Blue catfish have been stocked.

The highlight here is the trophy musky population, many in the 30-40 pound range.

The lake has two boat ramps and rental boats available.

The lake has a lighted pier which is accessible to the handicapped. The lake is located on Route 123 midway between Woodbridge and Fairfax. For information, call the park at (703) 323-6600.

Abel Reservoir (Stafford County)

"Abel Reservoir should be our best walleye lake, but anglers haven't figured out how to catch them," says Steinkoenig. Probably one reason the 185-acre Abel is not fished very heavily is because the boat ramp is on the upper end, while the walleyes are down in the deep water at the lower end. The reservoir is long and riverine and becomes a long haul for a single electric motor.

In addition to the excellent walleye populations, Abel has some big largemouth bass which prove difficult to catch because of the lack of structure. There are good crappie and chain pickerel populations and pickerel up to 4½ pounds are not uncommon. Bluegills, pumpkinseed sunfish and channel catfish round out the catchable menu.

To get to Abel Reservoir, take Route 17 north from Fredericksburg to Route 616; turn right and go to Route 651 and turn right. Or, take Route U.S. 1 north towards Stafford, left on Route 628, then left on Route 651. For more information, call (703) 752-5632.

Lake Brittle (Fauquier County)

Lake Brittle is the oldest Department-owned, man-made lake.

Steinkoenig says the 77-acre lake has a good redear population with some fish going close to a half pound. It also has walleyes, channel catfish

that average just under 1½ lbs, and largemouth bass averaging around 1½ lbs. Currently, there is a 12-15 inch slot limit on largemouth to help control the high populations of stunted bluegills and crappies. Flat-head catfish have been stocked as an additional control over rough fish populations and stunted panfish. Anglers should release any catfish caught.

The lake has a couple fish shelters which are made by buoys. It also has a new ramp and a fishing pier. There is a concession which provides rental boats and electric motors from March to October.

Brittle gets a lot of fishing pressure due to its proximity to population centers. It is located off of Route 29 near New Baltimore, then Route 600 east to Route 793. For information, call (703) 349-1253.

Pelham Reservoir (Culpeper County)

Pelham is a 225-acre water supply reservoir for Culpeper, with a combination of forested and open, sloped banks along its shores. It's a shallow lake and a little muddy on its upper end, but has some deeper water towards the dam.

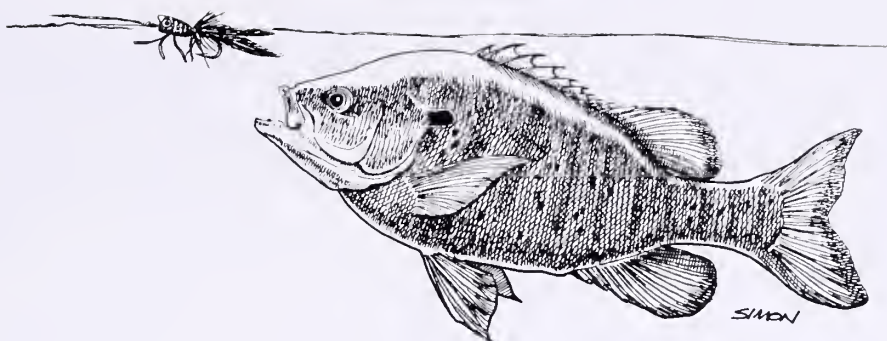
If you like crappie and channel catfish, Pelham is a place to go. Other species include largemouth bass, bluegill and pumpkinseed sunfish.

There is limited access with a public ramp on the lake's shallow end off of Route 718. Electric motors only are allowed and a permit is required from the Town of Culpeper (703) 825-4772. On weekends, call the local police department at (703) 825-0444. Pelham is located west of Culpeper by taking U.S. Route 29 west to Route 718 and turn right.

Mountain Run (Culpeper County)

Mountain Run is Culpeper's 75-acre Water Supply Reservoir. Largemouth bass provide the best fishing opportunity here, but there are also crappies, bluegills and channel catfish.

There is a dirt ramp and limited shore fishing. A picnic shelter and playground are located in a park



adjacent to the lake. Permits are required and can be obtained from the Town Office, 118 W. Davis St., Culpeper, VA 22701. Call (703) 825-4772 weekdays, or (703) 825-0444 weekends. Take Route U.S. 29 south from Culpeper, turn right on Route 718 to Route 719.

Ni Reservoir (Spotsylvania County)

Ni Reservoir is a 417-acre Spotsylvania County Water Supply Reservoir. It has a decent channel catfish fishery. Presently, walleyes are being stocked and the lake has good catchable populations of fliers. There are fair largemouth bass, bluegill and crappie populations.

The lake has a concrete ramp, concession and boat rentals. From I-95 north, take Route 3 west to Route 627 south. For more information contact (703) 582-7151 or the concession at (703) 786-2284.

Lake Manassas (Prince William County)

Manassas is an 800-acre reservoir. The lake has big crappies, and spring fishing for them is good. There's a good population of largemouth bass and walleyes. Channel catfish are also stocked. For information, call (703) 754-8181.

A new park, concession and pier are being built by the City of Manassas. From Route 29 take Route 215 east to Route 604 north.

Beaverdam Creek Reservoir (Loudoun County)

This 350-acre reservoir has a growing striped bass population with recent catches in the 3-4 lb. range.

Crappies are good in spring and the largemouth are generally small. Channel catfish are being stocked.

Access to the lake is primitive. The reservoir is on Route 659 north from Route 50.

Fairfax Lake (Fairfax County)

The lake has a number of facilities including a pool, campground and boat rentals. There is no ramp for private boats, but they can be carried in and launched.

The 28-acre lake was stocked in 1983-84 with bluegills, largemouth bass, channel catfish and crappies. "It's a good lake to take the kids to learn how to fish," says Steinkoenig. The park is on Route 606 west from Route 7. For information, call (703) 471-5414.

Lake Thompson (Fauquier County)

Lake Thompson is a 10-acre lake on the Game Department's G. R. Thompson Wildlife Management Area, that has smallmouth bass and channel catfish. Canoes or boats must be carried in a good distance. From Route 66, take Route 688 at Markham, north to the second parking area on left.

Fort A.P. Hill Ponds and Lakes

These are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For information call (804) 633-8300.

Quantico Marine Base Ponds and Lakes

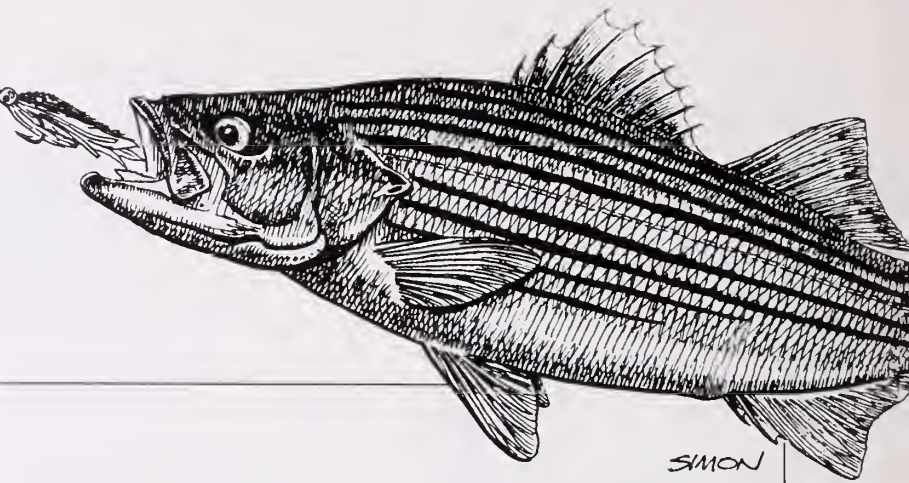
These ponds are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For information call (703) 640-5218.

Rivers

Rappahannock/Rapidan

Above Fredericksburg the Rappahannock and Rapidan provide excellent smallmouth bass, and red-breast sunfish angling. Thirteen citation smallmouths came out of the Rappahannock in 1989. Herring and shad run the river in spring providing plenty of action.

The Rappahannock below Fredericksburg has white perch, large-mouth bass, crappies, yellow perch, and big channel catfish and huge blue cats. Overall in 1990, the "Rapp" produced 260 citations including 97 white perch; 45 yellow perch; and 53 blue catfish.



For more fishing information, contact the regional Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries office nearest you:

Richmond
4010 West Broad St.
Richmond, VA 23230-1104
(804) 367-1000
1-800-252-7717

Vinton
209 E. Cleveland
Vinton, VA 24179
(703) 857-7704

Fredericksburg
1320 Belman Road
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
(703) 899-4169

Williamsburg
5682-A Mooretown Road
Williamsburg, VA 23185
(804) 253-7071

Deep Creek
6530 Indian River Rd.
Virginia Beach, VA
(804) 424-6719

Charlottesville
1229 Cedar Court
Charlottesville, VA 22901
(804) 296-4731

Staunton
Rt. 6, Box 484-A
Staunton, VA 24401
(703) 332-9210

Marion
Rt. 1, Box 107
Marion, VA 24354
(703) 783-4860

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries shall afford to all persons an equal access to Department programs and facilities without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex or age.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, please write to: Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, ATTN: Compliance Officer, 4010 West Broad Street, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104.



Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
P.O. Box 11104
Richmond, VA 23230-1104

Location of Tye River



photo by
Douglas Lees

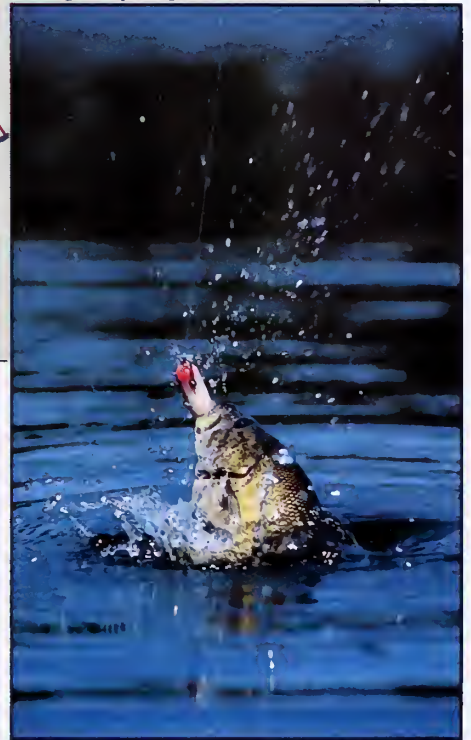


photo by Tom Evans

skirts the Tye as it passes through the villages of Tyro and Massies Mill to intersect with Route 151 near Roseland. As the river flows beneath the Route 151 bridge, it enters the piedmont region, the rolling country typical of the Blue Ridge foothills.

Downstream from Nash, tiny streams such as Campbell, Cox, Cub, Harpers, Mill Dam, and Silver Creeks, and Rocky Run add their waters to the Tye and it begins to pick up volume. The famous Appalachian Trail crosses the Tye River between Nash and Tyro.

Put-n-take trout fishing is concentrated in this section of the Tye, particularly that stretch downstream from where Route 56 bridges the river near the confluence of Campbell Creek. The stream also leaves the George Washington National Forest in this stretch of the river, and the trout fishing begins to fade rapidly.

After flowing under the Route 151 bridge, the Tye River follows a meandering course through farming country, flows under Route 56 again, and passes beneath U.S. 29 as a small impoundment, one that is confined to the river banks. It skirts Amherst County briefly and then swings almost due east to brush the community of Tye River. Tributaries in this section of the river include Black, Camp, Hat, Jennys, and Naked Creeks.

The river from Tye River to its confluence with the James River at Norwood is a popular smallmouth bass fishing stretch. While there is no formal access, canoes and light boats are launched from the Secondary Route 654 bridge a few miles downstream from the Tye River community.

The Buffalo River is a major tributary there. A sizeable stream in itself,

it enters the Tye approximately halfway between the Route 654 bridge and the mouth of the river.

"The bass fishing is usually best downstream from the mouth of the Buffalo," Jeff Schmick told me as we fished the river a few years ago. Jeff and his wife Christie operate a canoe livery and outfitting service at Hatton a few miles down the James River from the mouth of the Tye.

Generally, the Tye is a wading stream, although it can be canoed in its lower reaches, particularly for a few miles upstream from its confluence with the James. When the stream is flowing strong, canoeists will find some good white water. It's also a fast-flowing stream for the most part, though there are plenty of long, quiet pools that hold good fish.

Most anglers know the Tye primarily as a trout stream. And for a good reason. It is one of the best of several that race down the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and it is a stream that is reasonably convenient to the thousands of anglers living in the big eastern metropolitan centers. Additionally, good access from Route 56 that runs along its upper stretches makes it reasonably easy to fish.

In trout fishing lingo the Tye is a freestone stream, and its bed holds plenty of rocks to justify that classification. Boulders is a more apt description for some of them.

I like chest waders for fishing the main stem. Some of those pools are waist deep and the waders allow the angler to reach water he could not otherwise fish. That's an advantage on a hard-fished stream.

The Tye is stocked with brook, brown, and rainbow trout, and over the years I've enjoyed some fine brown trout fishing there. One neighbor and fellow angler likes to fish it for browns during the winter months when he has the stream just about to himself.

A racing, tumbling stream, loaded with boulders and rocks, the Tye is not a river to be taken lightly. A careless step and you can lose your footing and end up with boots or waders full of water—not to mention the possibility of a broken arm or other injury. Proceed carefully. I like to assure myself that I have one foot firmly planted before I move the other one. Most tumbles come when an eager angler moves one foot forward quickly and then lifts the other not realizing the forward foot is planted on a slippery rock.

The North Fork of the Tye is always an interesting stream to fish. One bright spring day I switched to it from the more crowded main river and was rewarded with a nice native brookie, a hatchery brookie, and a 3-pound rainbow that had been released in the stream after having served its time as a breeder in the Department's hatchery program. Or at least that's my assumption. Those three trout came in quick succession, first the hatchery trout, then the native, and finally the big rainbow. The old lunker hit twice. I missed the first time, but the big fish gave me a second chance. That, too, is a Tye River fishing experience that I won't soon forget.

The North Fork comes tumbling down that steep mountain slope in spectacular fashion, carving out deep pools and cascading over water-eroded boulders. It's a picturesque stream to lose yourself on for awhile, a George Washington National Forest stream that's a joy to fish. While the best bass fishing is found far downstream near the confluence of the James River, there are actually bronzebacks throughout the length of the stream except for that water near its headwaters that is probably too cold for the fish. The fish tend to become smaller as you move up the stream, but they're scrappy and fun to catch.

Smallmouth bass and trout are the mainstays of Tye River fishing, but not to be overlooked are the scrappy and tasty little yellowbreast fish found in fast streams throughout most of Virginia. They thrive in the Tye River, also. Like the bass, they are not likely to be found far up near the headwaters, but they can be caught in most of the stream. And, of course there are the rough fish common to most Virginia streams. Catfish get lots of attention from night fishermen, and there are carp and suckers, the carp mostly far downstream. Suckers make spring spawning runs far up the river. Gar are far from abundant, but I spent a good 10 minutes trying to entice one to hit my bass lure on a trip near the mouth of

the river. They are not common, but some do work up from the James River.

Over the years, the Tye River has had its share of pollution problems. Although its waters appear relatively clean at the moment, toxic materials originating from an ore processing plant located on the Piney River just above its confluence with the Tye have caused serious fish kills for years.

According to Bill Neal, Environmental Officer for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the problem then and now is the U.S. Titanium site on the Piney River west of Lovington. While operational, the plant processed ilmenite ore with sulfuric acid to produce titanium dioxide. Many of the waste materials buried on site, including spent sulfuric acid and solid ferrous sulfate are highly dissolvable in water and they are slowly leaching into both the ground water and Piney River just downstream from the Route 151 bridge. As a result, massive fish kills have been reported on the Piney, the lower Tye, and even the James River over the years. Says Neal, "the Environmental Protection Agency considers the area a Superfund site, and many agencies are working with the owner to overcome the problem. Hopefully, they will be successful and this 'time bomb' won't explode into another major fish kill. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is keeping its fingers crossed!"

In the meantime, the fishing both upstream and down is good. But, remember much of the Tye River is open to fishing because of the generosity of landowners through whose property it flows. Respect those property rights, ask permission to fish when in doubt, and *pack out your litter*. Its continued availability as a fine fishing stream is mostly in the hands of those anglers who now enjoy its bass and trout fishing. □

Bob Gooch is an outdoor newspaper columnist and author of several books on hunting and fishing. He lives in Troy, near Charlottesville.

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Journal

Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally—May 10-11

The 17th annual Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally will be held Friday and Saturday, May 10-11, in Konnarock, Virginia. Sponsored by the United States Forest Service, the Mount Rogers Citizens Development Corporation, and the Naturalist Rally Committee, the Rally will feature guest speaker Dr. Phil Shelton, professor of Biology, Coordinator of the Environmental Science Program, and Chairman of the Natural Science Department at Clinch Valley College. Dr. Shelton's Friday evening lecture focuses on populations of beavers, wolves, and moose in Isle Royale National Park, Michigan. Approximately 20 field trips will be led by recognized experts in the fields of botany, geology, ornithology, and other areas. There will also be hikes to the top of Mount Rogers, the highest mountain in Virginia. The Rally will be of special interest to birdwatchers, students of natural history, nature photographers, and geologists, as well as anyone who enjoys the study of wildlife and the outdoors. The registration fee is \$3.00, plus \$5.50 for the home-cooked meal that accompanies the lecture on Friday, May 10th. For more information or to register, write Carrie Sparks, Naturalist Rally Registrar, 301 Look Avenue, Marion, VA 24354. □

Letters

Kudos for February Issue

Once each month I receive a copy of my favorite magazine, *Virginia Wildlife*! My best friend gave me a subscription as a Christmas present a couple of years ago and I look forward to each copy with anticipation and a feeling of warmth as if it were a handshake from my oldest and dearest friend.

Thank you very much for the wonderful job you and your staff are doing and thanks again to my good

ol' buddy for his gift. Keep up the good work.

Christopher J. Kelley
Boston, Mass.

I have been subscribing to *Virginia Wildlife* for several years now and have always enjoyed the magazine. The February, 1991 edition is certainly no exception. The "Mountain Kin" photo essay brought back wonderful memories of all the good times spent on weekends and summers at my grandmother's farm midway between Zepp and Star Tannery in the Shenandoah Valley. This volume will always be one of my favorites. Keep up the good work.

Hadden Culp
Woodbridge

Virginia Wildlife, February 1991 issue, "Special Photo Issue" . . . What a beauty!

I went through the issue at least six times and will undoubtedly go through it again and again. I hope adequate thanks will be given to all those who provided the excellent pictures. Above all, be sure to impress them on just how much we enjoyed their efforts. No one is going to get this one away from me . . . ever.

Fred Molzhon
Newport News

Thank you. Your February issue took me all the way home for one entire afternoon.

Susan Roberts LeBlanc
former resident of Waynesboro

Well, you finally did it. As a subscriber to *Virginia Wildlife* for many years I always dreaded the February issue.

Hunting season is over and fishing is yet to come, so to me February is a dull month, just to keep January and March apart.

Not this time. My February issue arrived last week and I have not put it down since. It is so wonderful, I have bought two extra copies. One for a friend in the Saudi Desert and one for a dear pen pal in Germany.

I don't see how you can top this

February issue, but I suspect you will.

Keep up the good work.

G. E. Honaker
Charlottesville

Hunters vs Animal Rights Activists

I'd like to comment on "War of the Woods" by Mike Fies. I know several hunters and animal rights activists. I don't profess to be either. I object to *Virginia Wildlife* printing this highly biased almost hysterical article. Has Mike Fies ever talked to any of the people he maligns? I think not, or if he did, not with a very open mind. All hunters are not slob hunters and all people concerned about animal welfare do not want to see animals in wildlife museums.

Two brief points: he portrays many of the people who were opposed to the hunting in Mason Neck Wildlife Refuge as kooks. In fact many of the people opposed to the hunt are themselves hunters. The Fairfax Audubon Society sued to stop the shooting hunt but were in favor of the bowhunt. Several residents were also opposed to the hunt. Audubon feared shooting guns off would disturb the eagles. The refuge was created for the eagles. Private property comes right up to the edge of the park and there are some private inholdings. It's a legitimate concern when you can have someone hunting in your backyard.

I'd favor using more tree stands and having bowhunters shoot from tree stands. This works at Ft. Belvoir, and the gun hunt is not needed.

This subject needs to be treated with more intelligence, logic, and insight. Fies criticizes Proposition 117 for having to acquire mountain lion habitat. What's wrong with that, especially if you like to hunt mountain lions?

I feel *Virginia Wildlife* is not a magazine for just hunters. Do hunters only run the wildlife refuges? With dumb articles like this, no wonder people are flocking to PETA.

Donald J. Walsh
Alexandria

Photo Tips

Photographing Virginia's Wild Turkey

by Lynda Richardson



"Stretching his neck in alarm, this young male turkey reacted to the sound of my camera. I suggest manually punching the shutter and slowly hand winding the film;"
photo by Lynda Richardson.

When the sun hits a wild turkey just right, its dull brown feathers transform into a rainbow of colors. If you want a photographic challenge requiring planning and patience, Virginia's wild turkey provides the opportunity you seek.

The first thing to do when you want to photograph wild turkeys, as with any animal, is to find out where they live. I start by asking hunters, biologists, game wardens, farmers, and anyone else, where they have seen turkeys. Once you find several locations, go and check them out. Ask the landowner if he or she has seen turkeys on their land, and find out if it would be possible to photograph these turkeys. Offer to give the landowner photographs of "their" turkeys in exchange for use of their land.

If you are granted permission, walk the creeks, wooded areas and fields,

looking for turkey tracks, scratchings and droppings. Once you have found an area which turkeys seem to frequent, choose a location that is open with good visibility and low vegetation for placement of your blind. The time of day you plan to visit a blind will determine where you should position it. Normally, you will want the sun shining on your subject, so place the blind where the sun shines from behind you. I use a compass to indicate sunrise and sunset so I can position my blind accordingly.

You're all ready for the turkeys, but how do you get them to come to your blind? Every turkey hunter knows that during spring gobbler season in April, gobblers are looking for breeding partners. If you learn to "talk turkey," you, too, can call in a strutting gobbler. There are a number of mouth and hand calls on the market which you can use. There are also electronic game callers which play recorded tapes of spring and fall hen turkey calls. Hunters are not allowed to use electronic calls for hunting, but photographers can use them anytime of year as long as they do not carry a gun.

If you don't want to fool with calling your quarry, a photographer can use bait, something which is strictly forbidden for the hunter. Cracked corn is a favorite of turkey. Unless there is an overabundance of food elsewhere, cracked corn will routinely bring turkeys to your blind. Place the corn within range of your longest lens and scatter it around so it can't be seen in your photographs. Plan on leaving the blind and the corn alone for at least two weeks before attempting any photographs. This will give the turkeys plenty of time to find the corn and acclimate to the blind.

When the turkeys arrive, I get so excited that I start shaking and can't

hold the camera still even on a tripod. If you're like me, try and remember to relax and watch the turkeys for at least 30 seconds before you grab the camera. Make sure none of them are looking at the lens when you move it because the movement will spook them. Also, don't use your motor-drive or autowinder! Turkeys and other animals can hear these mechanical sounds and it alarms them. I suggest manually punching the shutter and slowly hand winding the film.

Now, a word of caution. As you know, the wild turkey is a game animal hunted in the spring and fall of each year. Be aware of these seasons (dates and legal hunting hours) even if you are on posted land, because there is always a possibility of running into a poacher or lost hunter. If I must photograph during hunting seasons, I wear blaze orange when entering or leaving my blind. When first setting up your blind, it's a good idea to tie a piece of blaze orange cloth to a tree above or near it so the turkeys can get used to it and passing hunters will know you might be there.

Another thing to keep in mind is that it is illegal for hunters to shoot over bait. If the area you are photographing in is hunted, make sure you have stopped baiting at least a month before the hunting season starts. You don't want to place any well-meaning hunters in violation of hunting over bait which they have no idea is there. And, you don't want to place the turkeys at an unfair disadvantage, either.

Photographing Virginia's wild turkey is a challenge requiring a lot of work. But, when that large bird appears in your lens, you will be glad to have made its acquaintance while capturing its beautiful image on film. □

Recipes

A Hearty Camp Stove Dinner

by Joan Cone

Many fishermen think of April in terms of trout and other coldwater species. Yet, this is the best month of the entire year for catching really big bass, both large-mouths and smallmouths. This is what the state statistics show.

Assuming the proverbial April showers don't dampen things too much, this is also a wonderful month to get outdoors, enjoy the dogwood and rhododendron and do some camping, along with outdoor cooking, before the heat, bugs and humidity appear.

Freshly caught bass, large or small-mouth, seem to taste especially good when cooked over a fire or on a camp stove. Assuming your worms or crankbaits produce results, bass fillets, skinned of course, can provide for some really fine eating for every member of the family.

Here is a camp meal which is fun to fix, great to eat and assuming you stay well within your legal limit, will not hurt the bass population.

Menu:

Camper's Warm-Up Cup
Golden Bass Fillets
Vegetable Medley
Corn Bread Rounds
Spiced Fruit Compote
Camper's Gorp Cookies
Hot Chocolate (from Mix)

Camper's Warm-Up Cup

1 can (11 ounces) cheddar cheese soup
1 can (10¾ ounces) cream of mushroom soup
1 can (10¾ ounces) tomato soup
3 soup cans water
1/2 teaspoon instant minced onion
1/2 to 1 teaspoon crushed oregano leaves

In a large saucepan, stir soups. Gradually blend in water and add

onion and oregano. Heat; stir occasionally. Makes about 7 cups.

Golden Bass Fillets

1 egg, slightly beaten
2 tablespoons yellow mustard
1/2 teaspoon salt
1½ to 2 pounds skinned bass fillets
Instant mashed potato flakes
Oil or melted shortening

Lightly beat together egg, mustard and salt in shallow pan. Dip bass fillets in egg mixture, then roll in potato flakes, mixing well. Fry in hot oil or shortening 3 to 4 minutes on each side until fish flakes easily when pierced with a fork and is golden brown. Makes 4 to 5 servings.

Vegetable Medley

1 can (1 pound) whole kernel corn, drained
1 can (1 pound) peas, drained
1 large tomato, diced
3 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon Tabasco sauce

Combine corn, peas, tomato, butter, salt and Tabasco in a saucepan. Stir and heat to serving temperature. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Corn Bread Rounds

1 package (8 ounces) corn muffin mix
1 tablespoon nonfat dry milk
1 egg
1/3 cup water

Combine muffin mix and dry milk. Beat egg and water to blend; add to mix, stirring until just moistened. Drop batter in mounds, using about 2 tablespoons for each, onto a lightly greased griddle or skillet. Cook over low heat, turning to brown both sides—about 6 minutes. Makes 8 corn bread rounds.

Spiced Fruit Compote

6 cinnamon apple herbal tea bags

2 cups boiling water

1 package (11 ounces) mixed dried fruit, chopped

Whipped topping

In medium saucepan, brew tea bags in boiling water for 5 minutes; remove tea bags. Add chopped fruit and simmer 25 minutes or until fruit is tender. Serve warm with topping. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Campers' Gorp Cookies

Note: These cookies can be made at home and used as snacks while hiking or fishing.

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1/2 cup packed brown sugar

1/2 cup shortening

1 egg

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 1/4 cups Bisquick baking mix

1 cup quick-cooking oats

1/3 cups chopped nuts

1/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips

1/4 cup raisins

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Mix sugars, shortening, egg and vanilla. Stir in remaining ingredients (dough will be stiff). Drop dough by rounded teaspoonfuls about 2 inches apart onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake until set but not hard, about 12 minutes. Cool about 3 minutes before removing from cookie sheet. Makes about 4 dozen cookies.

Hot Chocolate (from mix)

2 cups non-dairy creamer

1 1/2 cups sugar

3/4 cups unsweetened cocoa

1/2 cup nonfat dry milk

1/4 teaspoon salt

In large container, combine ingredients and mix well. Store in airtight container. To serve, spoon 2 to 3 heaping teaspoons of mix into mug. Add 1 cup boiling water and stir. □

Family Outdoors

Wild Taste Treat

by Carl "Spike" Knuth

They resemble little sponges, standing atop creamy-white stems. Their forms vary from cone-shaped to round, and their colors from brown to tan to ochre or gray. They normally range in height from two to eight inches. Their surface has rounded cavities and ridges, and both their stems and heads are hollow and brittle. They are probably the most sought after of wild mushrooms and are known as morels.

Morels appear in spring, especially after soft, warm rains have bathed the woods. They push wet coverings of leaves aside as they reach for the sunlight. Morels grow in a variety of habitats, and are found in association with a wide variety of trees. Usually they'll grow in the same places, but occasionally they'll pop up mysteriously in lawns, orchards or railroad rights-of-way. In recent years the place to look was around dead and dying elms, where the morels feed off of the rotting wood to complete their life cycle. They have been found growing in beech-maple and oak forests, amid hickories, with poplar and willow as well as ash, in bottoms, and in burned-over areas. So favored were these mushrooms in Europe, that during the Middle Ages, whole forests in Central Europe were burned off just to induce morel growth.

There are several kinds of morels, but all are similar in looks. The family *Morchella* are the edible ones. They include the *Morchella angusticeps* (black morel); *Morchella esculenta* (white morel), the most common; and the *Morchella crassipes* (big-foot morel), the one that grows the largest. Once you've seen a morel or a picture of one, it is unlikely



Black morels; photo by Hal Horwitz.

you'll confuse it with anything else. Mycologists (mushroom experts) tell us that our common morels belong to the botanical order Ascomycetes. They are related to the famed European "truffle." The poisonous false morel—of the genus *Helvellae* has thick stems and a large, velvety head with rounded ridges. It's often called the "brain mushroom" because of its resemblance to a brain. Others are saddle-shaped and a rich, reddish-brown in color.

Another false morel is the *Verpa bohemica*. It is easy to recognize when cut length-wise, because its stem is filled with fuzzy white tissue and the fact that its cap is attached only at the top of the stem. Its head is small and cone-shaped.

Morels sometimes grow in clumps from a common "root" system, more properly called mycelium. These are

root-like hairs that spring from spores which are the mushroom's equivalent of seed. Mushrooms propagate when these single-celled, microscopic spores germinate. The spores are in the air everywhere and are borne on the wind, often staying aloft for long periods of time. When they land on fertile ground, they sprout into mycelium, a white, lace-like mass, which ultimately grows into the fruited head.

Morels may show up in the same places for many years in a row, then disappear. This is probably due to the mycelium remaining undisturbed even if the tops have been picked and many mushroomers will take pains to cut or pluck the morel off above the mycelium to assure continued growth. Then, too, they may suddenly appear in an area they weren't found before. Attempts have been made to grow morels in controlled conditions, but have failed.

Morels go by a number of local names. In the deep South they are called "hickory chickens." Other names include "wood fish" (because some of them smell like fish), honeycomb mushrooms, "elm elves," sponge mushrooms, spring mushrooms and "m'rcles" (miracles—because they spring up suddenly after a rain). Depending on geographical location, morels fruit anywhere from mid-April through the first week in June, with the month of May being the peak. Once out, they last about a week, less if it turns hot and dry.

Morel mushrooms are the favorite of mushrooms hunters because they are safe, easy to identify and delicious to eat. Simply sauteed, fried in a batter or stuffed and baked, morels are a real taste treat. □

Habitat

Sycamore

by Nancy Hugo

Almost everything about the American sycamore is distinctive, from its enormous size to its mottled bark, its huge leaves, and its dangling fruit. To my eye, the white upper branches and smooth inner bark of the sycamore give the tree an almost feminine appearance, but if the sycamore is a woman, she's an Amazon.

Some old field guides describe the American sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*, as the largest tree in the central and eastern United States. How that determination was made, I'm not quite sure (are we talking about average sizes or sizes of individual specimens?), but I do know that although the largest single tree east of the Mississippi is a bald cypress, the second largest tree is a sycamore. That sycamore, located in Ohio, is 129 feet tall and has a trunk 15½ feet in diameter. Sycamores can get even taller (Virginia's largest sycamore is 140' tall), and heights of 170' have been recorded, but girth gives the Ohio tree its edge. Sycamores with enormous proportions have also been reported historically. The 18th century botanist Michaux described a dugout canoe made out of a sycamore that was 65' long and carried 9,000 pounds of cargo!

Size alone would make sycamores stand out in the landscape, but their unusual bark electrifies them. Especially in winter when there's no foliage to hide the scaffolding of their branches, sycamore branches stand out like bright lights against grey skies. The grey to green, white, and tan mottling of a sycamore's bark is the result of the outer bark's inability to stretch with the expanding trunk. The tree's outer bark peels off in irregular patches revealing the inner bark which gradually turns white. It's the smoothness of this bark stretched



American sycamore; photo by Lou Hinshelwood.

over the sinewy limbs of the tree that give the sycamore its strangely human aspect.

The leaves and fruit of the sycamore are unusual, too. Sycamore leaves are huge—often 10" across—and they have an unusual venation pattern that reveals their ancient ancestry. Even the way the sycamore leaf is attached to the stem is unusual: search for the winter bud of a sycamore and you'll find it not above the spot where the leaf joins the stem where it is on most other trees but under the base of the leaf stem, completely hidden and enclosed by it!

The fruit of the sycamore is a golf ball-sized mess of tightly packed achenes (single seeded fruits) that gives the tree its common names Buttonball tree and Buttonwood. In the American sycamore these balls hang singly from long stalks and persist through the winter, adding even more panache to the silhouette of a sycamore against the sky.

For as prolific as they are, sycamore fruits have surprisingly little value to wildlife, but goldfinches (and other finches) love them.

Sycamores also provide nesting sites for many species of birds and they provide footholds for hosts of animals along the riverbank. Wet places—stream banks, rivers edges, and bottomlands are sycamores' favored habitats, and they can grow there even where they seem to have more root out of the earth than in it. How an 80-foot tree can balance over the river at a 45 degree angle without toppling over when 3/4 of its roots seem separated from the riverbank is a mystery to me, but sycamores do it.

Sycamores' adaptation to oxygen-poor wet soils also makes them good trees for urban areas because they can survive compacted soils. I love them as street trees, but some people complain of their litter (big leathery leaves and buttonballs are less welcome on Main Street than they are on riverbanks.) I've also read that the windborne hairs released from sycamores' achenes can irritate some people's eyes, throats, and noses. Anthracnose, which affects the sycamore's developing leaves and stems, is a serious sycamore disease and one reason these trees aren't recommended more as street trees.

Most experts say "protect American sycamores where they grow in the wild but don't plant them." Ignoring this advice, I planted a sycamore in my side yard where it has grown from a sapling into a good-sized tree almost overnight. Most suburban lots are too small for these gargantuan trees, but if you'd like to share your habitat with a beautiful Amazon, a sycamore is the tree for you. □

Safety

Spring Boating Tips

by William Antozzi, Boating Safety Officer

When boaters start thinking about spring and early summer boating, they should concentrate on being really ready. First, check the gasoline tanks. Fill them, and if there is any evidence of water in the tanks, add dehydrators. If the engines have been idle all winter, they may be a little hard to start. Remember to open shutoffs in lines leading from gasoline tanks to engines. When each inboard engine is running, to determine that it is operating smoothly, advance the throttle so that it operates for a short time at about 1000 rpm.

Next, drain and clean filter separators, and to prevent leaks, check all fittings and lines which carry liquids of any kind. Lubricate linkage on diesel injection pumps. Clean the backfire flame arrestors. Every battery needs a check of the electrolyte level and you should check to see if it needs charging. Clean the battery top; clean and paint securing brackets. The starter next needs your attention. Clean the terminals and lubricate the drive. To get the remainder of the ignition system in shape, check the coil output, clean spark plug threads, check the gap on spark plug electrodes, replace plugs as needed, then inspect and test the plug wires for resistance.

Clean and use a very light WD-40 or silicone spray on cables, terminals, switches, circuit breakers, gauges, senders and fuses, but do not permit oil spray to coat electrical contacts such as switches and fuse holders. The alternator needs any rust or dirt cleaned from its pulley. Also, clean the terminals, adjust the belt and check the output.

If your boat has fresh water reservoirs, check the liquid and coolant levels. Many fresh water systems require a mixture of antifreeze and water. Remember the sacrificial zincs which should be replaced if half gone. The water pump pulley must also be cleaned, all belts and hoses should be inspected for cracks and oil coolers need checking for deposits.

Steering and controls are next. If your boat has cable-steering, cables must have proper tension. They should be adjusted and pulleys lubricated. Housed control cables cannot be lubricated so a binding cable must be replaced. Hydraulic steering may need the filter replaced and you should clean and lubricate the cylinder rod. You must replace hydraulic fluid in both your steering and tilt/trim fluid wells.

Outboards are usually about ready to go, but a few things must be done. Check the gas tanks and fill, (if you mix gasoline and oil, remember the oil), replace in-line filters and check fittings. Look over the ignition system, set the timing if necessary and clean or replace the spark plugs. Outboard lower units need to have the oil level inspected and at the same time any water that might have gotten into the unit should be drained. You should also check the battery electrolyte level, clean the terminals and charge the battery if necessary.

If your boat has a propeller shaft which comes through the bottom, there will be a stuffing box which limits the amount of water which can get into the boat alongside the shaft. Inspect the stuffing box and repack as necessary.

Transmission oil level, and the hoses and fittings on the oil cooler must be checked. Shift linkage might need adjusting.

Be sure to check stern drive lower unit oil and hydraulic fluid. The trim-tilt mechanism needs lubrication.

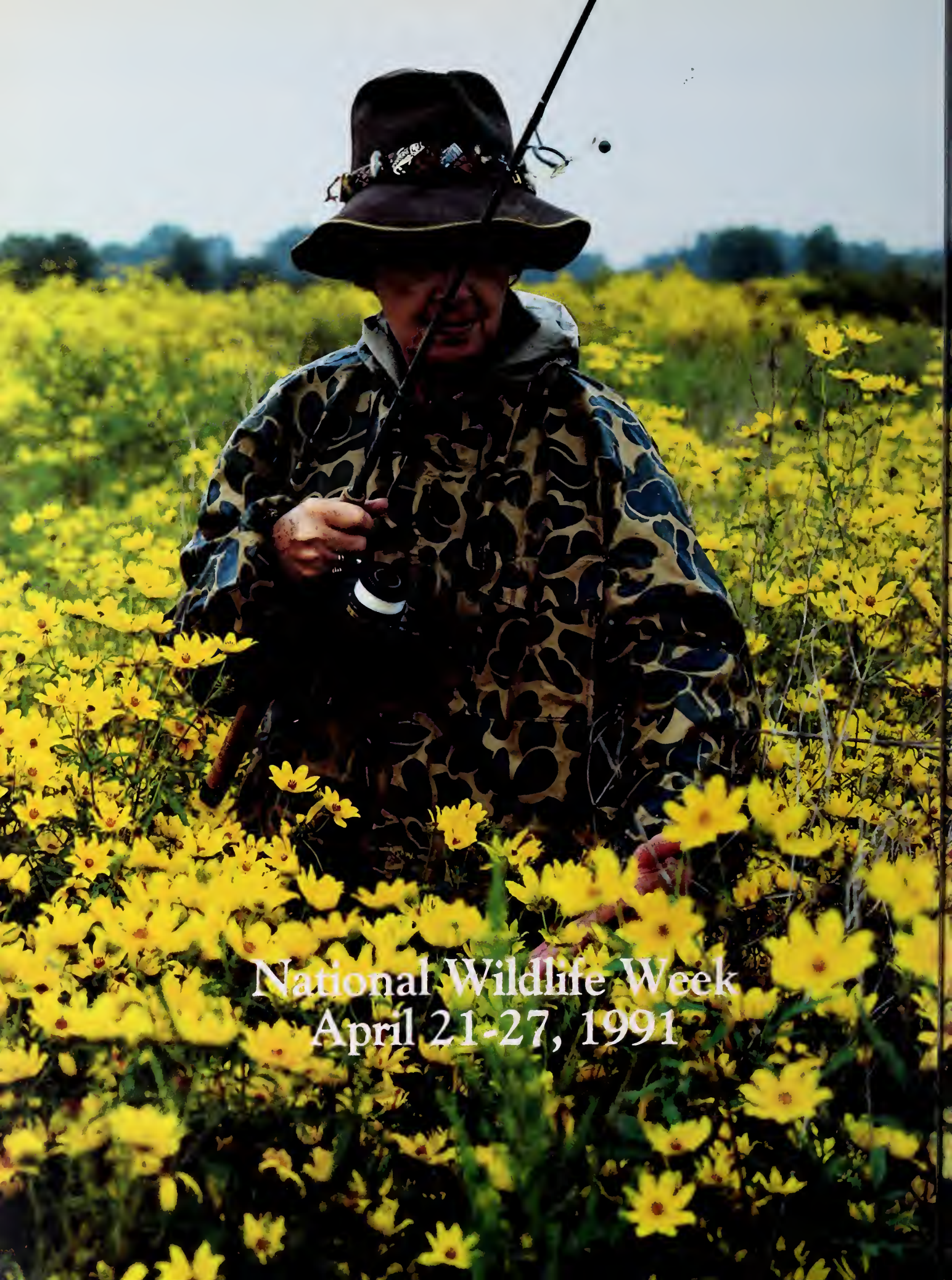
If you want your boat to glide smoothly through the water, make sure the hull is clean and smooth.

Any inboard engines which use raw water for cooling have probably had the seacocks closed during the winter. They must be opened before starting engines. Failure to do that can result in overheated engines and possible damage. When all preparations are completed, take a test run near shore and not too far from the launching site or your home slip. If any trouble develops, it is best to have it happen close to home.

Be certain to check all your safety equipment, such as PFDs, (life preservers), fire extinguishers, running lights, anchor lights, dock lines, auxiliary propulsion (paddle, oar or trolling motor), horn, visual distress signals, bilge pump, VHF-FM radio, compass, etc. Make sure you carry your boat registration or documentation papers.

There are many VHF-FM radios in use that are using crystals. They should be checked every couple of years to be certain the radio is transmitting and receiving on the proper frequency. Also, the transmitter and antenna should be checked for proper power output.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary will be happy to give you a free boat examination to make certain that everything is shipshape. □



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